Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership 2022-2023 Twenty-Sixth Annual Report

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October, 2023

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INTRODUCTION

Acknowledgements

RECAP (Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership) is made possible through valuable contributions from Rochester community members including parents and families, early childhood education program staff, funders, policymakers, and volunteers. The RECAP Assessment Team is grateful to its partners who meet with us twice monthly, year-round, to plan and implement the evaluation process. This team works collaboratively to continuously improve the RECAP system to meet the needs of young children, families, and early childhood education programs.

Financial support for RECAP is provided by Rochester Area Community Foundation, Rochester's Child Fund of the Rochester Area Community Foundation, and Rochester City School District (RCSD). We are further grateful for our Digital Uniting Caring Connection donors, who made this new program possible: ESL Charitable Foundation, Rochester Area Community Foundation, and the Community Crises Fund launched by United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes with Rochester Area Community Foundation. This program provided support for family engagement for families in the RCSD prekindergarten program in both schools and community-based organizations.

Participating community based organizations (many of which are also members of the Early Childhood Education Quality Council) include: Action for a Better Community's Early Education Division, Asbury Day Care Center, Baden Street Clinton and Charles House Centers, Caring and Sharing Child Care Center, Community Child Care Center, Community Place of Greater Rochester, Creative Beginnings Child Care, Friendship Children's Center, Generations Child Care Centers, Ibero Early Childhood Services, Little Hearts Child Care, Oregon Leopold Day Care Center, Richard M. Guon Child Care Center at Monroe Community College, Rochester Childfirst Network, St. Paul's Child Care Center, Volunteers of America Children's Center, and the UCP Finger Lakes Golisano Happiness House. Rochester City School District programs included: the Florence S. Brown Pre-K Center at School No. 33, Rochester City School District Montessori Academy, Rochester City School District Rochester Early Childhood Education Center, and 24 Rochester City School District prekindergarten sites in elementary schools. We have a special thank you for the Rochester City School District Office of Communications, who graciously worked with us to make the online UPK Family Survey possible.

We thank teachers, adult family educators, paraprofessionals, family service coordinators, center directors, and school administrators who contribute their expertise and numerous hours of work to RECAP. We extend our gratitude to thousands of parents and other caregivers who share essential feedback regarding prekindergarten programs and experiences with program staff routinely. Families are an indispensable component in the comprehensive RECAP model.

The RECAP Advisory Council, chaired by Nancy Kaplan, Coordinator of Rochester's Child, plays an instrumental role by providing feedback and advice regarding assessment goals, needs of children and families, and effective use of RECAP data to inform early childhood policymaking in Rochester. We are grateful to the Advisory Council for its wisdom and for advising our team how best to enrich the relevance of RECAP in community-wide decision-making on behalf of children, families, and programs.

We also extend thanks to our partners at COMET Informatics, LLC. Their product, COMET®, is a web-based system that supports and promotes our use of "real-time" data to inform the Rochester community regarding child outcomes as well as storing data for longitudinal analyses.

Authorship statement: Erinn B. Duprey conducted analysis and drafted the report, Kathleen M. Embt conducted analysis, managed data, revised the report, and wrote the Family Survey chapter; Joseph McFall, Lauri Strano, and Ann Marie White revised the report; David Peelle managed data, provided feedback on the writing, and provided input on interpreting analyses; Andrew MacGowan and Robin Hooper provided critical feedback on the report contents and recommendations; Linda Murray and Genemarie Van Wagner provided information on the ECERS-3 and classroom observations; Geri Cone provided continuous support for data analytics and editing the technical report; Kim Avery provided essential input on pre-K screening via the GROW program; Renae Whittington analyzed qualitative data and developed tables for the Caring Connectors Year 2 analysis; Ann Marie White provided guidance to the analytic design.

Executive Summary

Below is a summary of findings from the 2022-23 report of the Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership. Our findings span multiple levels of the pre-K system, from the individual child (e.g., social-emotional adjustment) to the classroom environment, and at the program as well as the family and system levels. Preschool students in the 2022-23 school year are a unique cohort, having spent their infant and toddler years developing in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, this year's evaluation results should be viewed in this context. The reader is reminded that these are descriptions of this cohort and their experiences inclusive of the special "pandemic and post-pandemic" conditions of recent times.

Despite this, our findings also highlight a remarkably resilient preschool system. Classroom quality ratings remain high, showing that our educators, on average, have been able to retain quality classroom environments despite high levels of teacher turnover and staffing shortages. Classroom quality scores among the integrated special education classrooms were remarkably high. Additionally, we found a significant impact of two years of pre-K (versus one year) on kindergarten readiness, wherein students who attended pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 had a 14.7% higher rate of kindergarten readiness compared to those who only attended one year of pre-K. In this report we expand upon these findings and discuss specific policy recommendations.

Student Outcomes

Social emotional. RECAP uses the Teacher-Child Rating Scale, short form (T-CRS-sf) to assess social and emotional adjustment in fall and spring. Overall, pre-K students exhibited growth in all areas of social and emotional adjustment that were assessed, including task orientation, behavior control, assertive social skills, and peer social skills. Effect sizes ranged from small (.06) to medium (.34). Consistent with prior years, students showed the least growth in task orientation and behavior control, and the most growth in assertive social skills. However, the amount of growth in peer social skills was significantly smaller in 2022-23 compared to previous years, with a small effect size of .08 for pre-K-3 and .06 for pre-K-4 students. There were 40.0% of pre-K-3 students in fall and 36.5% in spring who had multiple domains of social emotional risk, and 32.3% of pre-K-4 students in fall and 28.7% in spring who had multiple domains of social emotional risk.

Pre-Academic. Children's growth in pre-academic, physical, and social-emotional domains is assessed three times a year using the Child Observation Record (COR) Advantage. Results revealed adequate growth in these areas of development, with an overall effect size (i.e., Time 1 to Time 3 change) of $d = 1.79$ and $d = 2.09$ for 3- and 4-year-old students, respectively. These effect sizes are higher in 2022-23 compared to 2021-22 (1.69 for pre-K-3 and 1.96 for pre-K-4 in 21-22). Spring COR Advantage results showed that 45.5% of pre-K-4 students were kindergarten ready. This is approximately a 2% improvement from 2021-2022. There was a significant impact of two years of pre-K, wherein 36.3% of children who attended pre-K-4 only were considered

kindergarten ready in spring, while 51.0% of children who attended both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 were considered kindergarten ready in spring.

The COR Advantage was also used to evaluate students' success in bilingual classrooms. Results were overall positive, showing that English Language Learners enrolled in bilingual classrooms had (a) a faster rate of growth (i.e., improvement) in English Language skills, and (b) higher overall COR Advantage scores, compared to those not enrolled in bilingual classrooms.

Screening. Developmental screening is conducted yearly for 3- and 4-year-old students via the Brigance Early Childhood Screen. Brigance scores reveal that 30.8% of 3-year-olds and 34.1% of 4-year-olds were categorized "at risk". There were 8% of pre-K-3 students and 11.5% of pre-K-4 students screened as being "academically talented".

The Rochester City School District and Children's Institute's Get Ready to GROW program also conduct health screenings in the domains of hearing, vision, motor, and speech/language. There was a sizeable number of both pre-K-3 and –4 students in need of follow up based on these screening results. For instance, 53.2% of pre-K-3 students were screened as needing a follow-up or referral in speech and language. One out of two pre-K-4 children arrived at preschool with at least one flagged screening.

Attendance. Overall, 3-year-olds attended on average 71.1% of school days, while 4-year-olds attended on average 72.7% of school days. These averages are 1 to 2 percentage points higher than 2021-22 for 3- and 4-year-olds, respectively. However, attendance remains lower than historical averages (i.e., in 2016-17 there were 36% of pre-K-4 students who attended 90% or more days, while in 2022-23 there were only 20.2% who attended 90% or more days).

Program Quality

ECERS-3: Classroom quality is measured via the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, 3rd edition (ECERS-3). The overall ECERS-3 score among RECAP classrooms was a 5.4, which is consistent with "good" classroom quality, and notably is the same score as in 2021-22 and close to pre-COVID scores. The highest subscale-scores were on 'Interaction' and 'Program Structure', and the lowest were 'Learning Activities' and 'Space and Furnishings'. Contrary to findings last year, there was no difference in ECERS-3 scores based on teachers' level of experience. These results highlight the resilience of the RECAP system despite high amounts of teacher turnover and shortages.

Family Engagement

Family survey results: Overall, most findings in 2022-23 are consistent with findings in past years. From the Family and Teacher Relationship Quality (FTRQ) measure, most parents

responded that they had an excellent relationship with their child's teacher. Again, this year, the lowest score was in the area of "Practices - Communication", and the highest in the area of "Attitudes -Respect". This can be translated into parents feeling valued and respected but finding some challenges with communication. We will also report on the questions we asked parents with regard to child at home literacy, health, adjustment, and experiences, and family wellbeing and preschool satisfaction.

Caring Connectors: In Year 3 of our Caring Connectors intervention, we offered two separate programs. The Fall 2022 program was titled "Be Your Child's Voice" and was designed to support families of pre-K children who were either receiving or were planning to receive special education services. In spring 2023, the program was titled "Healthy Me – Healthy We" and focused on social and emotional learning, infant and early childhood mental health, and the importance of emotional health for parents. Fall 2022 results highlighted the program's effectiveness at increasing parents' content knowledge and strengthening connections both between caregivers and schools, and between caregivers with other caregivers.

Recommendations

Recommendations include: strengthening professional development opportunities in high quality pre-K classroom practices, particularly for new teachers; the continued full implementation of the Pyramid Model with a focus on trauma-informed practices to improve social-emotional learning and development; growth of the bilingual classroom program; and a focus on screening all pre-K-aged children as early as possible. We also strongly recommend that children receive two years of pre-K (i.e., pre-K-3 and pre-K-4), given our findings on the importance of the additional year of pre-K to increase kindergarten readiness. Our full recommendations can be found in *Conclusions and Recommendations,* the last chapter of this report.

Introduction to RECAP

The Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership (RECAP) is a community-wide assessment partnership dedicated to improving the quality of early childhood education in Rochester. RECAP translates data into practical information for families, educators, and policy makers through community collaboration, technical assistance, and professional development. The model of RECAP is two-fold: first, "low stakes" assessments, where all teachers, agencies and schools have the chance to grow; second, "continuous improvement" – in other words, continuously using data to inform decision making and practice in our pre-K system. RECAP has provided reliable information on early childhood care and education in Rochester for more than three decades. As such, RECAP is an essential partner within Rochester's pre-K-12 educational system.

The services and activities provided by RECAP include:
- Professional development for teachers, paraprofessionals, and program administrators in the use of child screening measures, assessments, program quality rating scales, use of web-based data information system (i.e., COMET®), and report interpretation.
- Efficient and user-friendly data collection, processing, analysis, and reports that provide rapid feedback at the child, parent, classroom, grade, program, and system levels.
- Twice monthly review and planning Assessment Team meetings with staff from community-based organizations including, for instance: Action for a Better Community (ABC) Head Start, Rochester City School District (RCSD) Department of Early Childhood, and The Children's Agenda. Community Advisory Group meetings to facilitate partnership with the local community, families, professionals, and other stakeholders.
- Presentations of aggregate outcomes for pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 to support informed decision-making for practices and policies in support of children, families, and programs.
- Additional resource development to help expand and improve capacity for addressing needs identified in its continuous improvement, assessment, and partnership efforts.

Assessment Tools

A core aspect of the RECAP system is our rigorous assessment methods using reliable and valid measures to assess program quality, family experiences, and student outcomes.

In the 2022-23 school year, we again deployed the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Third Edition (ECERS-3) to measure overall quality and teacher-child interactions. The ECERS-3 is an observational measurement tool administered by independent observers in classrooms.

In keeping with national trends, state requirements, and local needs for screening early in the school year, the Brigance Early Childhood Screen III (Brigance III) was administered by teachers within the first 90 days of the school year or at time of student entrance into programming. Additionally, the Child Observation Record - Advantage (COR-Advantage) was used to measure levels of students' competencies and needs in multiple domains (including physical, social-emotional, and academic). The COR Advantage is a standards-based, developmentally appropriate instrument completed by teachers three times yearly (fall, early winter and spring). We also utilized the Teacher-Child Rating Scale short-form (T-CRS-sf; the Short Form was first implemented in 2019), which measures social and emotional skills and is completed by teachers in fall and spring. Teachers are trained each year in how to complete the T-CRS and COR Advantage. Family perspectives on Rochester's early education programs were measured with the 2022-23 Universal pre-K Family Survey. This revised form of the Family Survey was launched in 2021-22 with modifications based on family input.

Table 1 below summarizes the measurement tools used and total number of assessments completed during the 2022-2023 school year.

Table 1. RECAP Variables, Measures, Numbers Assessed, and Method of Assessment

Variables	Measures	Units	*N*		Method
Classroom Environment Quality	ECERS-3	Classrooms	114		Classroom Observation by Independent Observer
Academic, Motor, and Social	COR Advantage (COR+)	Students	*Pre-K-3* Fall: 872 Winter: 864 Spring: 892	*Pre-K-4* Fall: 1,277 Winter: 1,267 Spring: 1,277	Teacher Observation
School, Emotional, and Behavioral Adjustment	Teacher-Child Rating Scale- short form (T-CRS-sf)	Students	*Pre-K-3* Fall: 818 Spring: 808	*Pre-K-4* Fall: 1,207 Spring: 1,158	Teacher Observation
Academic Skills, Physical Development, and Health	Brigance Early Childhood Screen III	Students	*Pre-K-3*: 920	*Pre-K-4*: 1,327	Children's Direct Performance; Teacher Observation
Family Perspective	Family and Teacher Relationship Quality (FTRQ) with RCSD-specific questions	Caregivers of pre-K students	224		Electronic Survey completed by Parents and Caregivers

Student demographics:

At the annual Basic Education Data System (BEDS) day on November 15 (for pre-K; the first Wednesday in October remains for K – 12 in New York State), there were a total of 2,427 pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students enrolled in full-day prekindergarten. However, pre-K registration and enrollment is rolling throughout the year and there are frequent changes in enrollment numbers throughout the year. Tables 2 and 3 below show RECAP student demographics for pre-K-3 and pre-K-4. These demographics were pulled from year-end data (June 2023).

Table 2. RECAP Pre-K-3 Student Demographics (N = 1,426)

		Percent	N
Gender	Male	50.0%	713
	Female	49.9%	711
	Unknown or Other	0.1%	2
Race	Black/African American	60.6%	864
	White	21.3%	304
	Multiracial	14.4%	206
	Asian	2.2%	31
	American Indian or Alaska Native	0.5%	7
	Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	0.6%	9
	Unknown	0.4%	5
Ethnicity	Latino	29.3%	418
	Non-Latino	70.7%	1,008
IEP	Students with IEP	14.9%	213

Note. These numbers include students marked as "active" at year-end, including some students who are CPSE eligible (i.e., remain attending general education UPK classes). These numbers do not include students who have CPSE placements.

Table 3. RECAP Pre-K-4 Student Demographics (N = 1,773)

		Percent	N
Gender	Male	48.6%	862
	Female	51.4%	911
Race	Black/African American	60.6%	1,075
	White	24.5%	435
	Multiracial	10.7%	190
	Asian	2.7%	48
	American Indian or Alaska Native	0.8%	15
	Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander	0.5%	8
	Unknown	0.1%	2
Ethnicity	Latino	32.4%	574
	Non-Latino	67.6%	1,199
Disability	Student with a Disability	15.5%	275

Note. These numbers include students marked as "active" at year-end, including some students who are CPSE eligible (i.e., remain attending general education UPK classes). These numbers do not include students who have CPSE placements.

PROGRAM QUALITY – ECERS-3

A major goal of RECAP is to provide the highest quality learning environments for preschool students in Rochester. As such, RECAP conducts yearly evaluations of classroom environments using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, 3rd edition (ECERS-3; Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2015). The ECERS-3 is an observational tool that is used by trained and reliable observers. The tool consists of 35 items on a 7-point scale, with 1 indicating "Inadequate" quality and 7 representing "Excellent" quality. The 35 items are organized in six subscales: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language and Literacy, Learning Activities, Interactions, and Program Structure. An average score is calculated for each of the six subscales, and a total score is calculated which is the average of all subscales. Note that three items are allowed to be missing (i.e., scored N/A), thus the total score denominator ranges from 33-35. ECERS scores above 5.0 are considered reflective of "good" classroom quality, while scores ranging from 6.2-7.0 are considered reflective of "excellent" classroom quality.

Training is provided by RECAP instructors to teachers, paraprofessionals, technical support staff, directors and administrators to learn about the ECERS-3 and its quality indicators, the classroom observation process and interpretation of feedback reports. RECAP trainers have had extensive, in-depth ECERS-3 education, maintain RECAP protocols and standards, and follow the most recent 'Notes for Clarification' by the authors of the ECERS-3. These trainings play an instrumental role in the success of Rochester's early education continuous improvement processes.

ECERS Procedures for 2022-23:
Random Selection: We were unable to observe every RECAP classroom due to the pause in RECAP and ECERS observations, although we were able to observe most classrooms. Consequently, we implemented a stratified sampling procedure to obtain a random sample of classrooms that would be representative of the full RECAP population.

To obtain the stratified random sample, we first characterized classrooms by four criteria: (1) organization (i.e., school based or CBO), (2) grade level (i.e., pre-K-3, pre-K-4, or mixed), (3) teacher certification status, and (4) teacher experience. Based on these characteristics, we used a random sample generation script in R (programming language) and the 'sampling' package to produce a representative, random sample of classrooms. Observers conducted ECERS observations in the classrooms that appeared on the generated list.

Reliability: All classroom observations are systematically checked for reliability. In the 2022-23 school year there were 13 observers who were trained to reliability. A total of 114 observations were conducted which includes 12 co-observations completed to maintain reliability between raters. After co-observations, observers discussed scoring differences and came to consensus. These agreement scores were used in the subsequent analysis. All observers maintained 85%

reliability or higher, where reliability is defined as scoring within 1 point of the true consensus score on at least 85% of the items. A post-hoc inter-rater reliability score was also calculated using the Krippendorff's alpha coefficient, which measures absolute agreement between two coders. This inter-rater reliability alpha averaged .8, which represents acceptable reliability.

Representative Sample

There were a total of 168 classrooms in the 2022-23 school year that were eligible to be observed. ECERS observers were able to conduct 114 classroom observations. Over two-thirds (67.9%) of classrooms were observed. As noted above, classrooms were selected based on a randomized list. See Table 4 below for a comparison of the observed classrooms with the full RECAP population of classrooms (i.e., all pre-K classrooms).

Table 4. Sample and Population Characteristics of ECERS/RECAP Classrooms, 2022-23

	Full Population	Observed Sample
Variable	*N (%)*	*N (%)*
Classroom Type		
Pre-K-3	58 (34.5%)	38 (33.3%)
Pre-K-4	79 (47.0%)	55 (48.2%)
Mixed/Integrated	27 (16.1%)	21 (18.4%)
Bilingual	4 (2.4%)	0 (0%)
School Type		
School-based	90 (53.6%)	60 (52.6%)
Community-based	78 (46.4%)	54 (47.4%)
Teacher credential		
Certified	116 (69.0%)	82 (71.9%)
Uncertified with CDA	10 (6.0%)	7 (6.1%)
Uncertified	35 (20.8%)	21 (18.4%)
Missing data	7 (4.2%)	4 (3.5%)
Teacher Experience		
0-3	87 (51.8%)	62 (54.4%)
4-6	24 (14.3%)	17 (14.9%)
7-9	17 (10.1%)	10 (8.8%)
10+	36 (21.4%)	24 (21.1%)
Missing data	4 (2.4%)	1 (.9%)
Total	**168 (100%)**	**114 (100%)**

Aggregate Results

On average, the aggregate ECERS-3 performance in 2022-23 remained relatively consistent with prior years. The overall ECERS score for 2022-23 was 5.43 (compared with 5.43 in 2021-22). The largest change overall was a decline in the "Interaction" subscale from 6.22 in 2021-22 to 5.90 in the current year. ECERS-3 aggregate results, broken down by subscale, are in Table 5 below.

Table 5. ECERS-3 Aggregate Results

Variable	N	Mean	SD
Space and Furnishings	114	4.94	0.99
Routines	114	5.25	1.14
Language and Literacy	114	5.62	0.97
Learning Activities	114	4.75	1.02
Interaction	114	5.93	0.98
Program Structure	114	6.12	1.01
Total	114	5.43	0.81
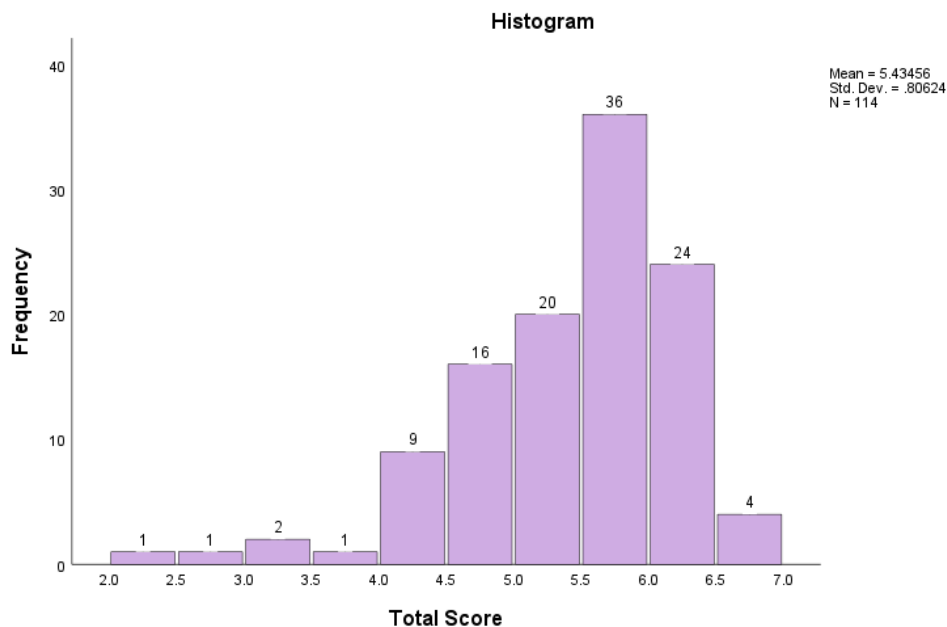
Figure 1. Frequencies of total ECERS scores. Note that the standard deviation represents the amount of "spread" or variation in scores.

Results Separated by Grade

Table 6 shows the ECERS-3 results by grade. There were 38 pre-K-3 classrooms, 55 pre-K-4 classrooms, 7 mixed pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 classrooms, and 10 classrooms that were integrated special education classrooms serving more than one grade. There were an additional four mixed-grade classrooms observed that were not included in the analysis below. These integrated classrooms follow the Montessori model and include kindergarten students.

Results from an ANOVA showed significant differences across grades in several subscale scores: Space and Furnishings (F = 4.51, p < .001), Language and Literacy (F = 2.31, p < .01), Interaction (F=4.10, p < .001), and Program Structure (F = 4.51, p < .001). Overall, classrooms that were integrated received the highest scores on the ECERS. In Figure 2 we show these results broken down by grade category.

Table 6. ECERS-3 Results by Grade

Subscale		Pre-K-3			Pre-K-4			Mixed Grade			Integrated	
	N	**Mean**	*SD*	*N*	**Mean**	*SD*	*N*	**Mean**	*SD*	*N*	**Mean**	*SD*
Space & Furnishings	38	4.86	0.73	55	5.03	1.00	7	4.49	0.76	10	5.87	0.55
Routines	38	5.16	1.20	55	5.46	1.15	7	5.11	0.83	10	4.90	1.07
Language & Literacy	38	5.63	0.95	55	5.68	0.94	7	4.97	0.80	10	6.14	0.43
Learning Activities	38	4.63	0.89	55	4.90	1.02	7	4.72	0.82	10	5.16	0.56
Interaction	38	5.85	0.83	55	6.06	0.77	7	5.60	0.89	10	6.72	0.25
Program Structure	38	6.04	1.02	55	6.31	0.85	7	5.24	1.05	10	6.73	0.41
Total	38	5.36	0.70	55	5.57	0.76	7	5.02	0.61	10	5.92	0.32
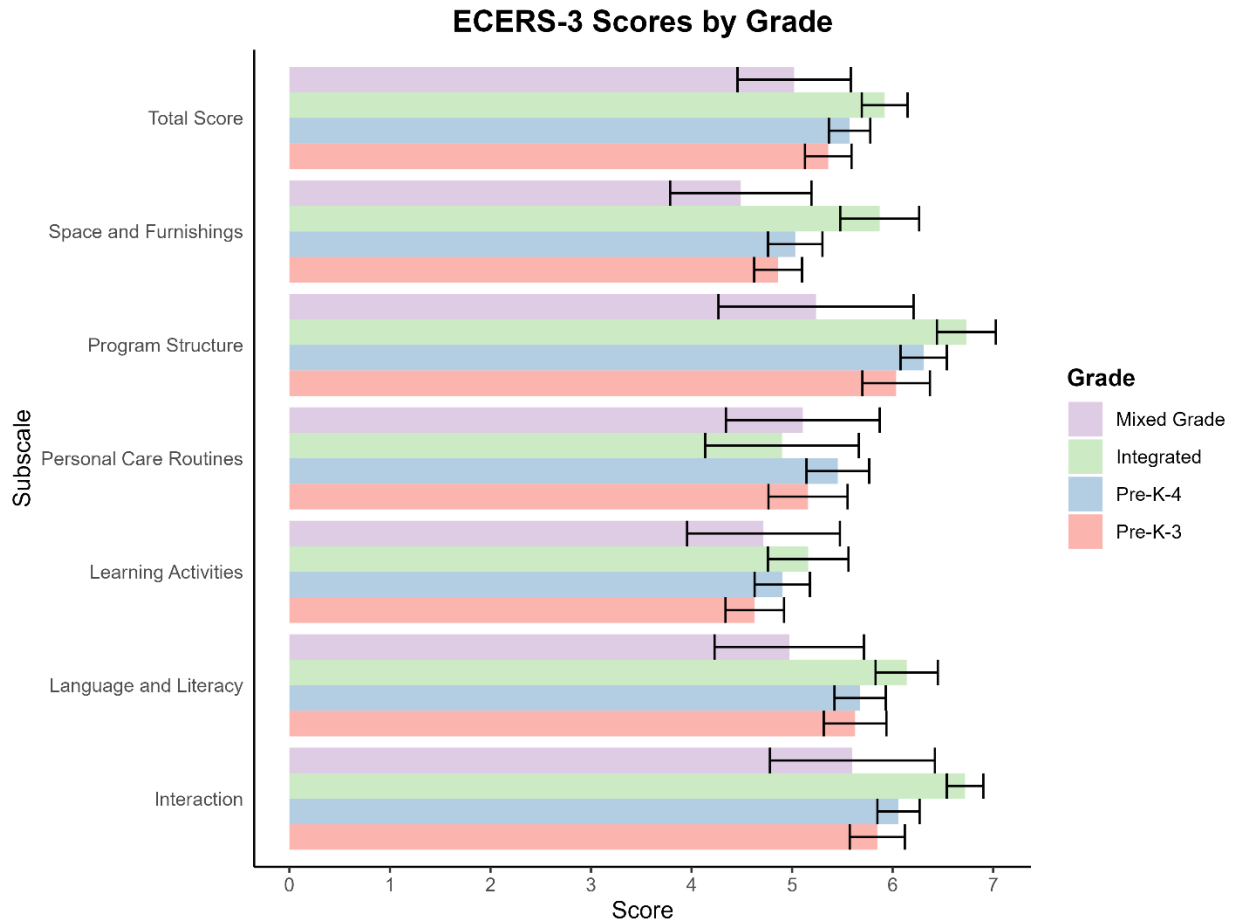
Figure 2. ECERS results for pre-K-3, pre-K-4, and integrated classrooms. Note that the black error bars indicate the 95% confidence intervals – in other words, the margin of error.

Results Compared to Prior Years of Administration

Figure 3 depicts scores in 2022-23 compared to the four previous years of program-wide administration. In this figure, note that we have placed a reference line at a score of 5. Scores that are 5 and above are interpreted as "good" quality. As can be seen in this figure, ECERS-3 scores in the current year are strikingly similar to prior years of administration.

ECERS-3 Aggregate Scores for Current and Previous Years

Variable	22-23	21-22	18-19	17-18	16-17
Total	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.3	5.3
Space and Furnishings	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.9
Routines	5.2	5.2	4.7	5.1	5
Program Structure	6.1	6.2	6.1	6	6
Learning Activities	4.7	4.7	4.9	4.6	4.5
Language and Literacy	5.6	5.5	5.7	5.4	5.4
Interaction	5.9	6.2	6.2	6	6.1
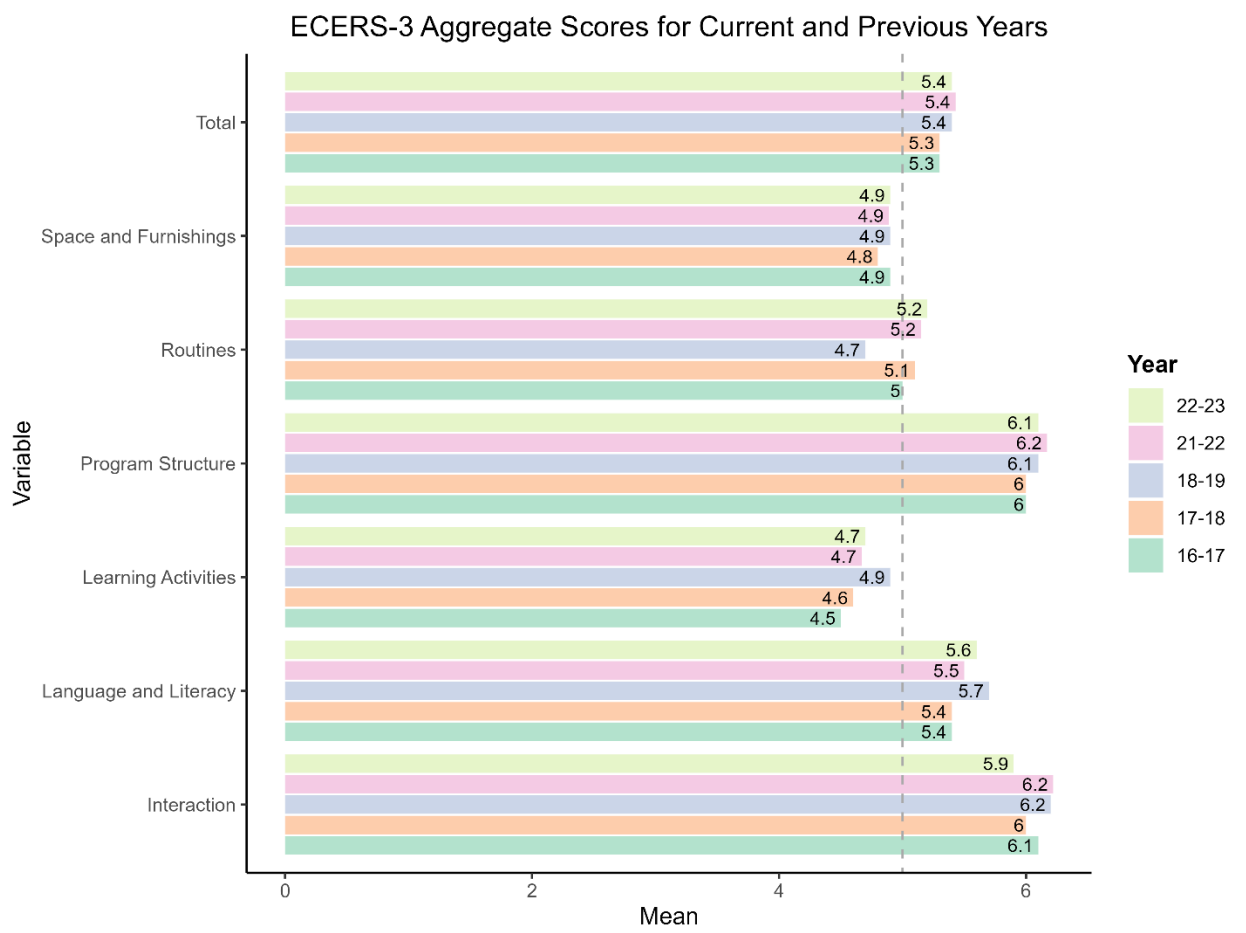
Figure 3. ECERS-3 scores for current and previous four years. The dotted line is at a score of 5 and indicates "good" quality.

Associations with Teacher RECAP Experience

In previous years of RECAP, there has been a significant association between teacher experience and ECERS ratings, with more experienced teachers scoring higher (i.e., Duprey et al., 2022). Thus, we examined ECERS scores by teacher experience (see Table 7). We categorized teacher's experience (defined as years of experience teaching pre-K) in the following groups: 0-3 years, 4-

6 years, 7-9 years, and 10+ years of experience. Results from a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) show that there are not any significant differences in scores by teacher experience.

Table 7. ECERS-3 Scores by Teacher Experience

Variable	0-3 Years Experience		4-6 Years Experience		7-9 Years Experience		10+ Years Experience		F	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Space & Furnishings	4.97	1.05	4.96	0.83	4.87	1.14	4.93	0.89	.03	.99
Routines	5.10	1.16	5.43	1.13	5.30	1.39	5.53	0.98	.98	.41
Language & Literacy	5.57	0.96	5.51	0.87	5.70	1.01	5.86	0.98	.65	.59
Learning Activities	4.67	1.07	4.96	0.99	4.58	0.99	5.00	0.67	.99	.40
Interaction	5.93	1.10	5.93	1.01	6.18	0.70	5.91	0.71	.21	.89
Program Structure	6.15	1.02	6.16	1.01	6.03	0.97	6.21	0.82	.08	.97
Total	5.40	0.85	5.49	0.84	5.44	0.83	5.57	0.54	.30	.83

Conclusions

Overall, results from the ECERS-3 observational tool indicate that RECAP pre-K classrooms exhibit good quality. The overall score across observed pre-K classrooms was a 5.4, which is consistent with previous years. Although we were not able to observe every classroom in the RECAP system, as is typically done, the sample that was selected for observations was representative of the overall pre-K system. Thus, we feel confident that the overall ECERS results are representative of RCSD pre-K classroom quality.

There are several other notable findings. First, there were significant differences in ECERS-3 scores based on the composition of the classroom, with integrated classrooms having the highest scores, particularly on the Interaction subscale (score = 6.72). Integrated preschool classrooms have additional teaching staff in the classroom, and this may have led to higher scores on classroom quality. Second, there surprisingly were not any significant differences in ECERS scores based on years of teacher experience. This finding was different than years past. One possible explanation is the new implementation of a Scope and Sequence guide for all teachers to follow – providing them with structure for curriculum in language and literacy, math, and other areas. Additionally, the Rochester City School District Early Childhood Department implemented a New Teacher Training track that focused specifically on tying ECERS-3 and High Scope guidelines to classroom practices.

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PRE-K STUDENT OUTCOMES: SOCIAL EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENT

RECAP has consistently prioritized the holistic development of the child, making the assessment of social and emotional adaptation and progress throughout the academic year a central aspect of its approach. Social and emotional adjustment among pre-K children in the RECAP system is measured via the Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS), short-form version (i.e., TCRS-sf; Weber et al., 2017). The T-CRS was first published in 1979 by Primary Mental Health Project (PMHP, now Children's Institute).

The T-CRS-sf has four validated and reliable subscales related to classroom adjustment:
- **Task Orientation** is comparable to executive functioning and assessing how well a child can stay on task and participate in the classroom setting. Individual items include "self-starter," "works well without adult supervision," and "organized".
- **Behavior Control** assesses students' self-regulation, particularly during difficult or frustrating circumstances, and includes items such as "accepts imposed limits" and "tolerates frustration".
- **Assertive Social Skills** assesses students' ability to lead and speak up for themselves, with items including "defends own views under group pressure," and "comfortable as a leader".
- **Peer Social Skills** assesses children's ability to make friends and get along with others and is determined with items such as "well-liked by classmates" and "classmates like to sit near child".

Item responses range from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", and the summary scores range from 4-20 , with higher scores representing better social-emotional adjustment.

T-CRS-sf Results for Pre-K-3 and Pre-K-4

Results for three-year-olds are shown in Table 8. Chronbach's alpha coefficients for both fall and spring are above .87, indicating excellent internal reliability. Change in social-emotional adjustment from fall to spring was assessed using a paired t-test and calculating the accompanying effect size (Cohen's d). Significance was determined using a one-sided test set at $p < .05$.

There was a statistically significant change from fall to spring in all domains of social-emotional adjustment, though the only effect size of practical significance was in Assertive Social Skills. The largest change from fall to spring was in Assertive Social Skills, d = .32, which represents a medium effect. All other effect sizes were small, ranging from .08-.09. Peer Social Skills had the smallest effect size from fall to spring but exhibited the highest average levels at both time points. It is possible the relative lack of change in peer social skills represents a ceiling effect.

Table 8. T-CRS-sf Reliability, Descriptive Statistics, and Pre-Post Change, Pre-K-3

	Fall				Spring					
Subscale	*N*	*a*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*a*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*d*
Task Orientation	818	.87	12.44	3.93	808	.88	12.72	4.13	2.16*	0.09
Behavior control	816	.92	11.61	4.16	805	.92	11.87	4.22	1.87*	0.08
Assertive Social Skills	818	.89	12.83	84.24	807	.90	13.75	4.24	7.83***	0.32
Peer Social skills	818	.90	14.99	3.39	808	.90	15.27	3.55	2.04*	0.08

Notes: Chronbach's alpha (a) measures the internal consistency of the measure (i.e., reliability). "d" indicates Cohen's d, a measure of effect size. The denominator (i.e., standardizer) used for calculating d is the standard deviation of the difference scores.
*p < .05, ***p < .001.

Results for four-year-olds are shown in Table 9. All subscales exhibited excellent internal reliability, indicated by Chronbach's alpha coefficients that ranged from .86 to .91. There were significant pre-post improvements on all sub scales, with small to moderate effect sizes. Similar to pre-K-3 students, the largest change from pre- to post- was in Assertive Social Skills (d = .34, a moderate effect). The smallest effect size of change from fall to spring was Peer Social Skills (d = .06), although the average scores for both fall and spring surpassed the other subscales. This indicates that students generally fared well in this area compared to other areas of social-emotional adjustment but did not exhibit as much growth over time as with other areas.

Table 9. T-CRS-sf Reliability, Descriptive Statistics, and Pre-Post Change, Pre-K-4

	Fall				Spring					
Subscale	*N*	a	*M*	*SD*	*N*	a	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*d*
Task Orientation	1207	.86	12.87	3.78	1158	.86	13.22	3.88	3.57***	0.12
Behavior control	1206	.91	12.24	3.96	1156	.91	12.45	4.09	2.95**	0.10
Assertive Social Skills	1206	.88	13.74	3.74	1158	.89	14.68	3.70	10.29***	0.34
Peer Social Skills	1206	.89	15.29	3.12	1157	.91	15.42	3.32	1.76*	0.06

Notes: Chronbach's alpha (a) measures the internal consistency of the measure (i.e., reliability). "d" indicates Cohen's d, a measure of effect size. The denominator (i.e., standardizer) used for calculating d is the standard deviation of the difference scores.
*p < .05, **p < .001, ***p < .001.

Disaggregation by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

We disaggregated T-CRS-sf scores by student characteristics (gender, race, and ethnicity), to better inform service provisions for pre-K children. See the statistical supplement for more details. As we have found historically, gender (coded dichotomously as male/female) has a greater impact on students' social emotional adjustment scores, than race or ethnicity. (Note this pertains to the average – individual scores vary widely across both boys and girls).

Risk Scores and Comparisons with Previous Years

To assess risk on social emotional adjustment among pre-K students, we calculated a risk score for each student. "Risk" for each subscale of the T-CRS-sf was defined as scoring at or below the 30th percentile. A dichotomous "multiple risk" score was also calculated if students scored at risk (i.e., 30th percentile or lower) on at least two subscales of the T-CRS.

Results showed that, overall, there were 40.0% of pre-K-3 students in fall and 36.5% in spring who had multiple domains of social emotional risk. Among pre-K-4 students, there were 32.3% in fall and 28.7% in spring who had multiple domains of social emotional risk. See Table 10 below for details.

Additionally, Figures 4 and 5 show trends in social-emotional risk, by subscale, for the 2019-20 academic year through the current academic year. The T-CRS-sf was not collected in spring 2020 or during the 2020-21 year due to COVID-19.

Table 10. Multiple Social Emotional Risks Based on Percentile ≤30%, 2022-23 Year

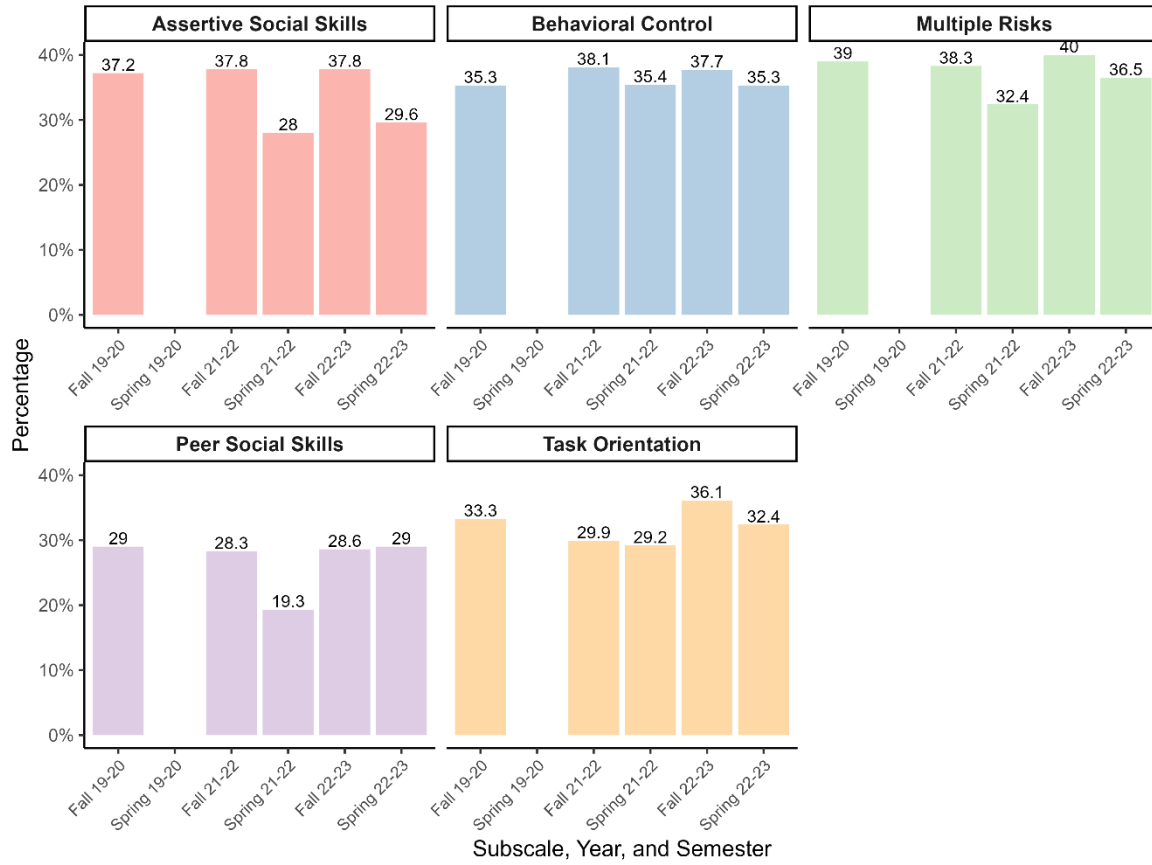|	Fall		Spring	
	n/total N	*%*	*n/total N*	*%*
Pre-K-3	327/818	40.0	295/808	36.5
Pre-K-4	390/1207	32.3	332/1158	28.7

Figure 4. Percentage of RECAP Pre-K-3 population at risk (≤30 percentile), Fall 19-20 through current year.
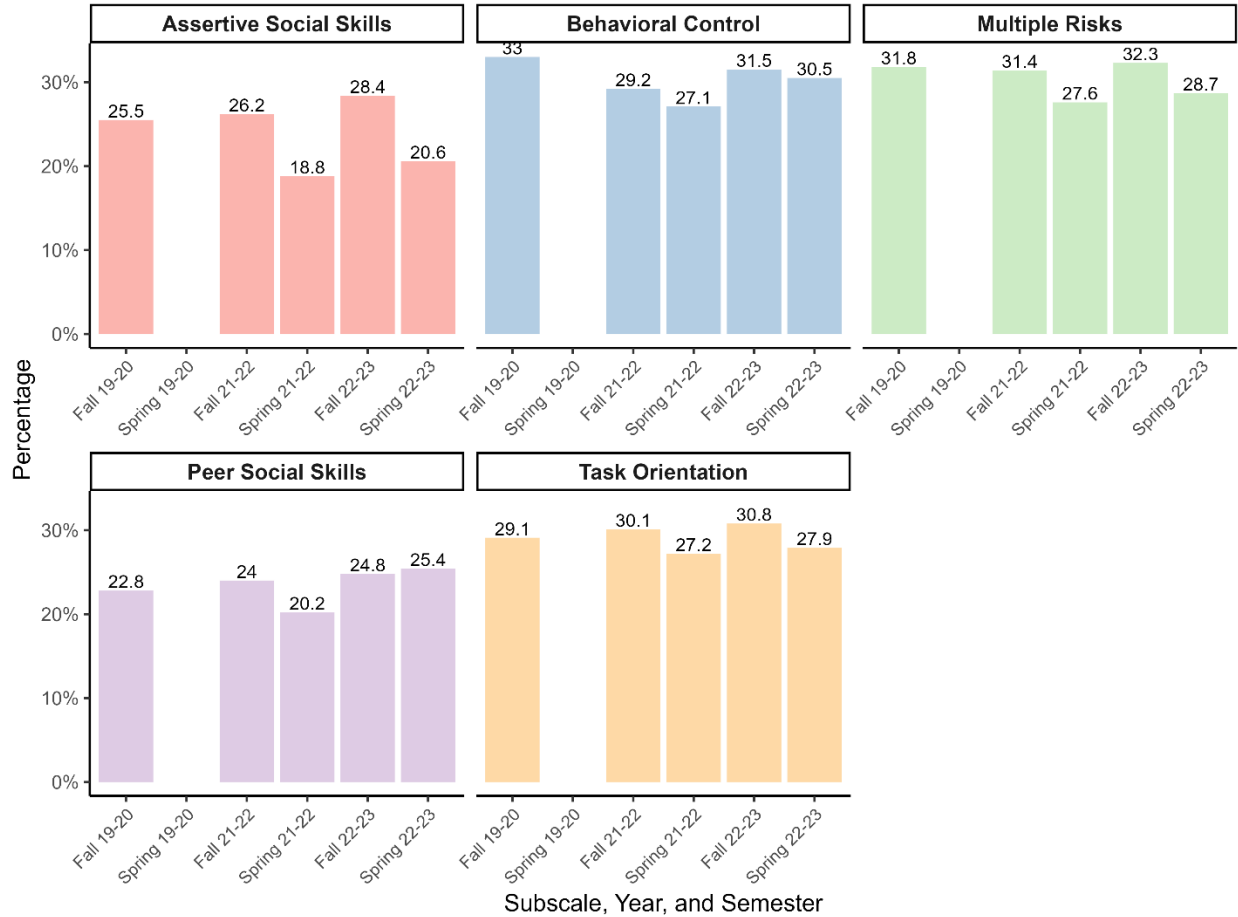
Figure 5. Percentage of RECAP Pre-K-4 population at risk (≤30 percentile), Fall 19-20 through current year.

Conclusions

There are several notable findings from our data on social-emotional adjustment among RCSD preschoolers. Data largely showed that pre-K students exhibited growth in all areas of social-emotional development, including task orientation, behavior control, assertive social skills, and peer social skills, with effect sizes ranging from .06 to 34. *Assertive Social Skills* showed the most improvement, or growth, over time, which is consistent with previous years' findings. *Task Orientation* and *Behavior Control* had smaller effect sizes ranging from .08 to .12, which is also consistent with previous years. It is likely that these domains reflect aspects of executive functions, which may not show as much change in the course of one preschool year. However, results indicate that *Peer Social Skills* are a possible area of concern. The effect size of change from fall to spring was .08 for pre-K-3 students and .06 for pre-K-4 students – much smaller than we have seen in previous years. For instance, in the 2021-22 school year, the effect size of change for *Peer Social Skills* was .28 among 3-year-olds and .21 among 4-year-olds. This may be the result of the isolating

effects of the COVID shutdown. These cohorts, more than previous ones, were at the epicenter of the COVID shutdown. Consequently, attention should be given to curriculum and teaching that can enhance peer social skills among preschoolers.

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STUDENT OUTCOMES: CHILD OBSERVATION RECORD (COR) ADVANTAGE

The Child Observation Record (COR) has been used by RECAP to evaluate pre-K child outcomes for over two decades. The COR Advantage is the latest version of the COR which was developed and is published by HighScope, a nationally recognized institution in pre-K curriculum and assessment. Currently, RCSD pre-K programs use the HighScope curriculum, and consequently our assessment methods are aligned with the curriculum. This alignment of curriculum with assessment methods is a key consideration for an effective instructional program. Below we present a description of the instrument and summary of results for the 2022-23 academic year.

The COR Advantage is a 36-item, teacher-reported inventory that assess students in eight categories:
- Approaches to Learning
- Social and Emotional Development
- Physical Development and Health
- Language, Literacy, and Communication
- Mathematics
- Creative Arts
- Science and Technology
- Social Studies
- English Language Learning

The COR Advantage has extensive evidence of reliability and validity (see Wakabayashi et al., 2019). Each item on the COR Advantage (COR+) is scored from 0 (lowest achievement) to 7 (highest achievement). RECAP teachers complete the COR+ at three time points (fall, winter, and spring). A total COR Advantage score is calculated based on children's category and overall scores. Specifically, this is the average of all eight content areas. Additionally, a *kindergarten readiness score* is computed. This is a dichotomous score (0, 1), wherein students who have an overall COR+ score ≥ 4.00, and every category with a score ≥ 3.75, are categorized as kindergarten ready.

COR Advantage Results for Pre-K-3 and Pre-K-4

The COR Advantage was analyzed by examining descriptive statistics and change scores between T1 (fall) and T3 (spring). A paired samples t-test was used to determine significance of change and effect sizes (d). Additionally, we used growth curve modeling (adjusting for clustered data) to examine change in COR+ scores over time, and to investigate differences between girls and boys, controlling for student race.

Below, Tables 11 and 12 display T1 (fall), T2 (winter), and T3 (spring) results for the COR+.

In Figure 6 and 7, we display results from the growth curve modeling analysis that show change over time in COR+ scores across its various categories.

Table 11. COR+ Results, Pre-K-3

	COR T1			COR T2			COR T3				
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	d	p
Approaches to Learning	878	2.35	0.74	886	2.94	0.85	913	3.40	1.01	1.32	<.001
Social & Emotional Dev.	890	2.38	0.80	878	3.05	0.89	908	3.45	0.99	1.43	<.001
Physical Dev. and Health	874	2.83	0.76	887	3.47	0.72	915	3.85	0.86	1.37	<.001
Language, Literacy, & Comm.	890	2.17	0.66	870	2.73	0.70	898	3.10	0.87	1.51	<.001
Mathematics	887	2.15	0.61	861	2.72	0.67	890	3.13	0.82	1.48	<.001
Creative Arts	874	2.34	0.79	886	3.00	0.84	903	3.52	1.01	1.45	<.001
Science and Technology	870	2.21	0.79	886	2.79	0.73	892	3.28	0.92	1.32	<.001
Social Studies	872	2.22	0.72	884	2.83	0.79	893	3.25	0.95	1.38	<.001
Overall COR	872	2.33	0.62	864	2.95	0.67	892	3.37	0.84	1.79	<.001

Table 12. COR+ Results, Pre-K-4

	COR T1			COR T2			COR T3				
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	d	p
Approaches to Learning	1299	2.93	0.77	1298	3.66	0.86	1327	4.33	0.97	1.74	<.001
Social & Emotional Dev.	1268	3.04	0.78	1317	3.74	0.82	1302	4.42	0.99	1.67	<.001
Physical Dev. and Health	1305	3.39	0.79	1279	4.15	0.80	1316	4.89	0.96	1.62	<.001
Language, Literacy, & Comm.	1268	2.85	0.70	1300	3.48	0.72	1259	4.09	0.87	1.77	<.001
Mathematics	1269	2.76	0.70	1305	3.54	0.79	1276	4.24	0.92	2.06	<.001
Creative Arts	1303	3.05	0.87	1277	3.84	0.85	1292	4.51	0.96	1.78	<.001
Science and Technology	1297	2.85	0.79	1267	3.57	0.80	1295	4.31	0.97	1.74	<.001
Social Studies	1283	2.86	0.77	1272	3.62	0.86	1305	4.37	1.02	1.53	<.001
Overall COR	1277	2.97	0.67	1267	3.70	0.71	1277	4.40	0.86	2.09	<.001

The figures below show the average student's growth trajectory in each of the COR Advantage categories. Among pre-K-3 students, *Language, Literacy, and Communication* and *Math* have the lowest scores and least amount of growth over the school year. Scores in *Creative Arts* exhibited the greatest change over time.
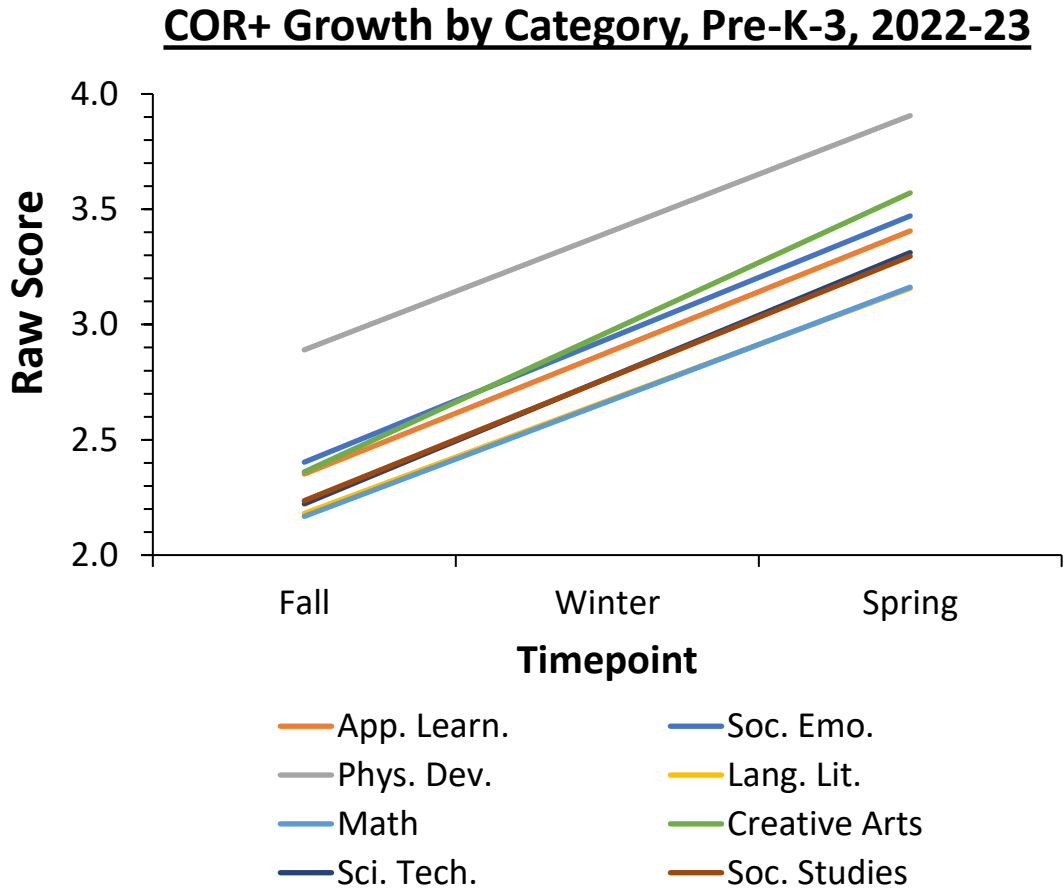
COR+ Growth by Category, Pre-K-3, 2022-23

Figure 6. COR domain specific growth scores among Pre-K-3 students.

Among Pre-K-4 students, *Language, Literacy and Communication* and *Math* were also the areas of greatest need. *Language, Literacy and Communication* had the lowest rate of growth over the school year.

COR+ Growth by Subscale, Pre-K-4, 2022-23
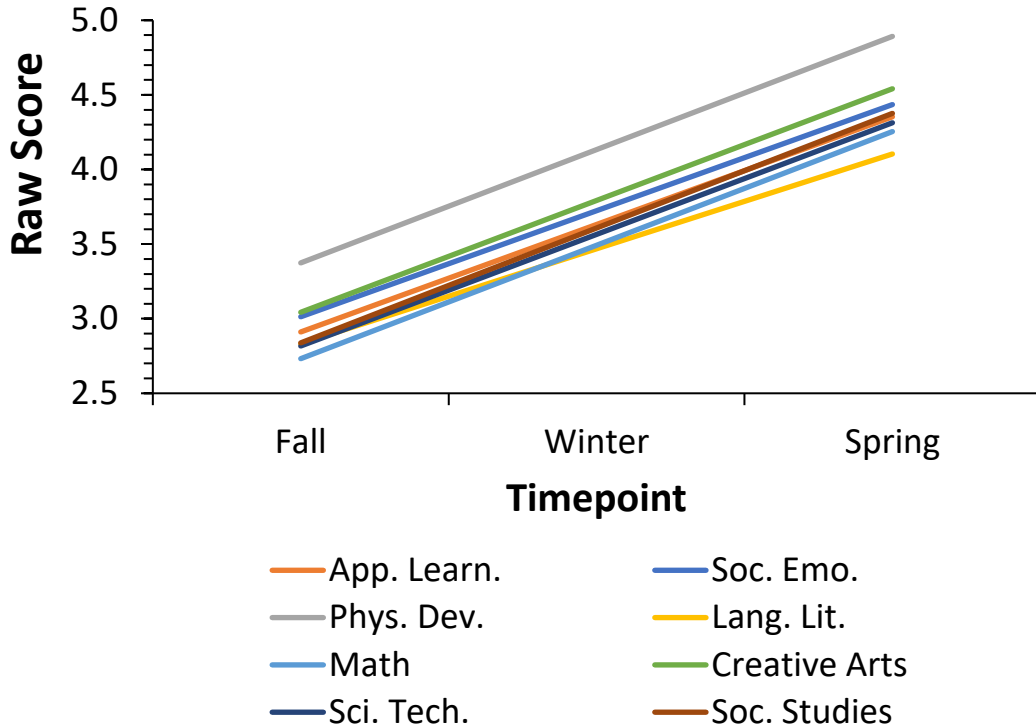
Figure 7. COR domain specific growth scores among Pre-K-4 students.

Demographic Differences by Gender, Race, and Ethnicity

Disaggregated COR Advantage results can be found in the Supplemental Report. Among pre-K-3 students, girls had statistically significant higher scores than boys on all COR categories at all time points. In pre-K-4, this pattern continued, except for Science and Technology at timepoint 3 (spring), in which there was not a statistically significant difference between boys and girls.

Kindergarten Readiness

At the spring 2023 assessment, 45.5% of pre-K-4 students were deemed "kindergarten ready" according to COR Advantage benchmarks. This is a slight improvement from the 2021-22 school year wherein 43.6% of students were deemed kindergarten ready in spring.

There was a significant impact of dosage of programming on level of kindergarten readiness. Among pre-K-4 students who attended pre-K-3 the prior year (i.e., who received an extra "dosage" of preschool), 51.0% were considered kindergarten ready. Among pre-K-4 students who did not attend in the prior year, only 36.3% were kindergarten ready. This difference was statistically significant according to a chi-square test, $\chi^2 = 26.62$ ($df = 1$), $p < .001$. See Table 13 for details.

Table 13. Effect of Years of Programming on Kindergarten Readiness

RCSD Student Type	Not Ready N (%)	Ready N (%)	Total N (%)
Attended Pre-K-4 Only	311 (63.7%)	177 (36.3%)	488 (37.5%)
Attended Pre-K-3 and Pre-K-4	398 (49.0%)	414 (51.0%)	812 (62.5%)
Total	709 (54.5%)	591 (45.5%)	1300 (100%)

Gender and kindergarten readiness: In contrast to findings from the 2021-22 school year, there was *not* a significant difference in kindergarten readiness between boys and girls. There were 47.9% of girls who were deemed kindergarten ready in spring, whereas 43.0% of boys were deemed kindergarten ready. However, the chi-square test was not significant ($p = .08$).

In the 2021-22 school year, 47.9% of all girls were kindergarten ready whereas only 39.0% of boys were kindergarten ready in spring. Thus, compared to the prior academic year, there was an overall improvement in levels of kindergarten readiness among boys.

Outcomes for Bilingual Classroom Students

There were four official bilingual pre-K-4 classrooms in the 2022-23 school year, with a total of 67 students. Of these students, 89.6% identified their ethnicity as Latino. In terms of race identification, there were 83.6% White, 9.0% Black/African American, 4.5% American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 3.0% Native Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander.

Differences in COR Advantage Overall and ELL subscale scores: Figure 8 below portrays the change over time in scores on the English Language Learner subscale of the COR Advantage and the total score. Change over time was modeled with a repeated measures ANOVA, including a component to test whether change over time was different between bilingual and non-bilingual classrooms (i.e., classroom by time).

We first compared English Language Learners in bilingual classrooms to English Language Learners in non-bilingual classrooms, using the ELL subscale of the COR. On the ELL subscale, students in the bilingual classes had lower scores at T1 (fall) and T2 (winter) but exhibited a "catch up" so that scores were not significantly different from non-bilingual classrooms at T3. The interaction between class-type (i.e., bilingual vs. non-bilingual) and time was significant, showing

that students in the bilingual classrooms had more pronounced growth in English Language Learning compared to those in non-bilingual classrooms.

Second, we compared all students in pre-K-4 bilingual classrooms with all pre-K-4 students in non-bilingual classrooms on the total COR advantage. On the COR Advantage total score, students in bilingual classrooms had higher scores in general from winter to spring. Additionally, the interaction between class-type (i.e., bilingual vs. non-bilingual) and time was significant, indicating that growth was more pronounced for students enrolled in bilingual classrooms. *Overall, these results show that enrollment in bilingual classrooms was associated with higher overall COR scores and more pronounced growth both on the COR total score, and specifically in English Language Learning*
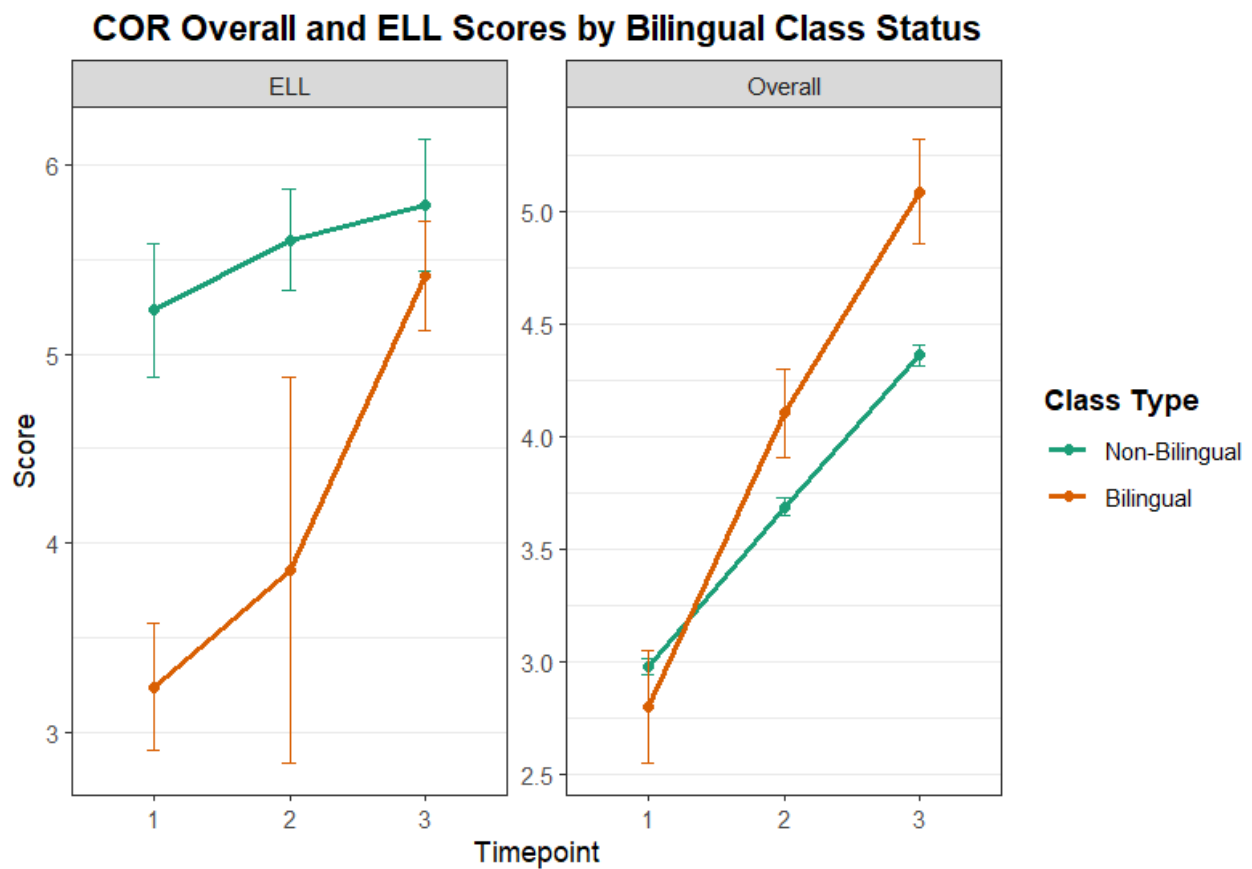

Figure 8. Overall COR and ELL scores for pre-K-4 students enrolled in bilingual classrooms (*n* = 67) and pre-K-4 students enrolled in non-bilingual pre-K-4 (*n* = 1,416) classrooms.
Note: The error bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Error bars that do not overlap indicate a significant difference between groups.

Conclusions

In conclusion, preschool students in the RCSD pre-K system exhibited appropriate academic growth, as measured by the COR Advantage tool. Effect sizes for the 2022-23 school year in different COR categories, along with the total score, were similar to (and slightly higher than) the 2021-22 school year but was lower to pre-Covid (the last full pre-Covid year, 2018-19 revealed larger effects sizes). Additionally, there was an increase in kindergarten readiness from 43.6% in 2021-22 to 45.5% in 2022-23. Furthermore, number of years of pre-K mattered for students: only 36.3% of children who attended pre-K-4 only were considered kindergarten ready in spring, while 51.0% of children who attended both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 were considered kindergarten ready in spring. This difference was statistically significant. This large difference in kindergarten preparedness may indicate that the extra year of RCSD preschool matters for these students – perhaps more than ever.

There are two other notable, positive, findings from the COR Advantage tool. First, there is some evidence that boys are "catching up" compared to girls. Historically, girls score higher on all measures of the COR Advantage compared to boys, including kindergarten readiness. While this was also the case for 2022-23 in terms of average scores, there was not a statistically significant difference in kindergarten readiness between boys and girls. Indeed, girls' level of kindergarten readiness was the same in 2021-22 and 2022-23 (47.9%) while boys' level of kindergarten readiness increased four percentage points from 39.0% to 43.0%.

Second, results reinforce the effectiveness of bilingual classrooms. As we saw in 2021-22, English Language Learners enrolled in bilingual classrooms had more growth in English skills over the course of the year compared to English Language Learners not enrolled in bilingual classrooms. Additionally, the total COR Advantage score was higher, and change was more pronounced, for students in bilingual classrooms compared to non-bilingual classrooms.

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STUDENT OUTCOMES: ATTENDANCE

Preschool student attendance is critical for students' growth and development over the course of the school year. Unfortunately, chronic absenteeism (i.e., <80% of days attended) is historically a widespread problem among preschool families. Poor attendance is often due to systemic barriers such as transportation[1], along with a lack of understanding of the importance of attendance for preschoolers' growth and development.

Descriptive Findings

Below (Table 14), we present descriptive statistics of pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students' attendance in the 2022-23 school year. Overall, 3-year-olds attended on average 71.1% of days, while 4-year-olds attended on average 72.7% of days. Note that there were 184 schedule school days for RCSD students in 2022-23.

Table 14. Attendance statistics, 2022-23 school year.

Attendance Category	Pre-K-3 (*N, %*)	Pre-K-4 (*N, %*)
<80%	656 (53.9%)	919 (51.0%)
80-90%	357 (29.3%)	517 (28.7%)
90% +	204 (16.8%)	363 (20.2%)
Attendance Category	**Pre-K-3 (*N, %*)**	**Pre-K-4 (*N, %*)**
<60%	308 (25.3%)	414 (23.0%)
60% +	909 (74.7%)	1385 (77.0%)
Attendance Averages	***M* (*SD*)**	***M* (*SD*)**
Days Present	113.76 (46.12)	119.86 (44.60)
Days Absent	41.73 (30.86)	40.09 (28.89)
Days Absent, Excused	12.41 (13.87)	10.06 (11.12)
Present Percentage	71.1% (22.0%)	72.7% (21.5%)

Below is a graph for daily trends in attendance over time, showing that rates of attendance generally declined throughout the school year.

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[1] New York State Universal Pre-K has never included transportation funding due to prohibitive cost. Some community-based organizations provide transportation. The RCSD Pre-K choice model is separate from the District K – 12 choice model. In pre-K, a family can live anywhere in Rochester and attend any program. (In contrast, the K – 12 choice model is Zone-driven.) The main mitigating factor for families of pre-K students are the 54 UPK sites strategically placed throughout Rochester.
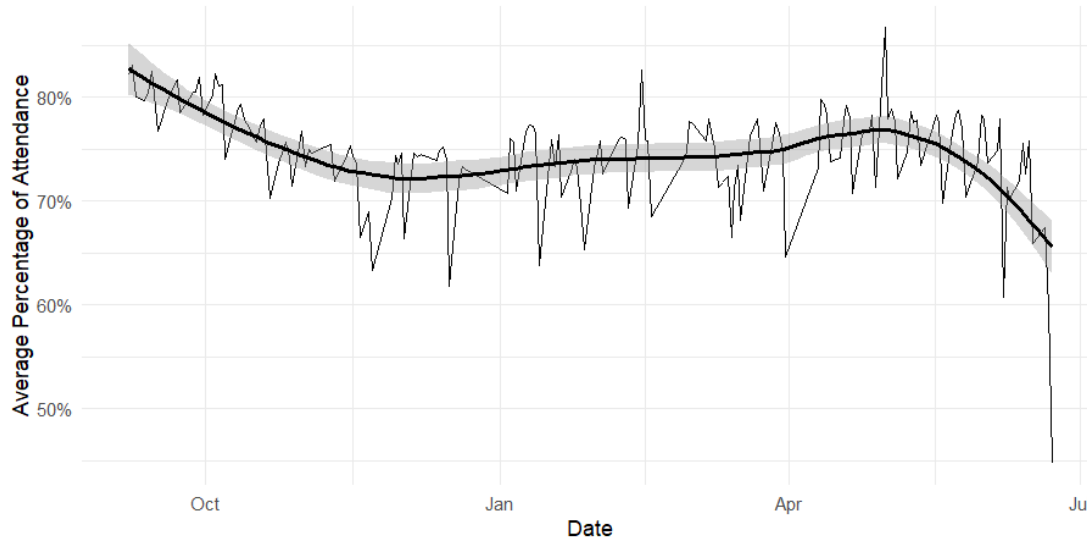
Figure 9. Daily trends in attendance in the 2022-23 school year, Pre-K-3 and Pre-K-4

Conclusions

Overall, these results indicate that attention is a critical issue that needs to be addressed within RCSD's pre-K system. More than one half of pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students fell within the "chronic absentee" category, having attended less than 80% of school days. There was a slight improvement from the 2021-22 school year, from 70.2% to 71.1% for pre-K-3 students and from 70.5% to 72.7% for pre-K-4 students. However, attendance still lags well below pre-COVID levels: in 2016-17, for instance, there were only 33% of pre-K-4 students and 42% of pre-K-3 students considered chronically absent.

PRE-K SCREENINGS

Brigance© Early Childhood Screen III

The Brigance Early Childhood Screen is administered to each pre-K student within the first 90 days of enrollment into the program, for most students, at the start of the school year (September-November). This well-validated and widely used tool is meant to provide information on each child's developmental level and possible needs. The Brigance includes three subscales for *Language Development, Academic and Cognitive Skills,* and *Physical Development and Health.* An overall score for Brigance III is calculated out of a possible 100 points. Based on this total score, there are two cut-off scores: one for determining the 'at risk' category, and another cutoff for determining the 'talented' category. The total score is used in conjunction with a calculated "At Risk" score, which is derived from a subset of Brigance III items which differ depending on student age and is used to derive the "In Need of Further Evaluation" category. Based on these criteria, a level is assigned to each student:

- **Determine need for formal evaluation**: students who are at high risk and may need further evaluation for developmental delays.
- **Monitor closely**: students who should be monitored closely.
- **Functioning in normal range**: students who are functioning in a normal developmental range.
- **Possibly talented and may need enhanced work**: students who are possibly talented and may need enhanced work and additional stimulation.

Results for Pre-K-3 and Pre-K-4

There were 920 pre-K-3 and 1,327 pre-K-4 students who received Brigance III scores in the 2022-23 school year. Table 15 displays screening counts and percentages. Notably, there were 30.8% of 3-year-olds who were categorized as "at risk" (i.e., Determine need for formal evaluation or Monitor closely). Among 4-year-olds, 34.1% were categorized as "at risk". On the other hand, 8% of pre-K-3 students and 11.5% of pre-K-4 students were screened as being academically talented.

Table 15. 2022-23 Pre-K-3 and Pre-K-4 Brigance Screening Status Outcomes

Screening Status	Pre-K-3 (*n* = 920)		Pre-K-4 (*n* = 1,327)	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Determine need for formal evaluation	242	26.3%	392	29.5%
Monitor closely	41	4.5%	61	4.6%
Functioning in normal range	563	61.2%	722	54.4%
Possibly talented and may need enhanced work	74	8.0%	152	11.5%

Trends in Brigance III Screening Results

Figures 10 and 11, below, show the trends in Brigance III screening results spanning from 2016-17 through the current year. Overall, results show a consistently high level of risk in RCSD preschool children through the years. The percentage of students deemed "at risk" (i.e., Determine need for formal evaluation or Monitor closely) is typically higher among pre-K-4 students compared to pre-K-3 students. Another notable trend is the increase in students screened as "academically talented". Among 4-year-olds, 11.5% were screened at this level of ability, which is the highest proportion in years.

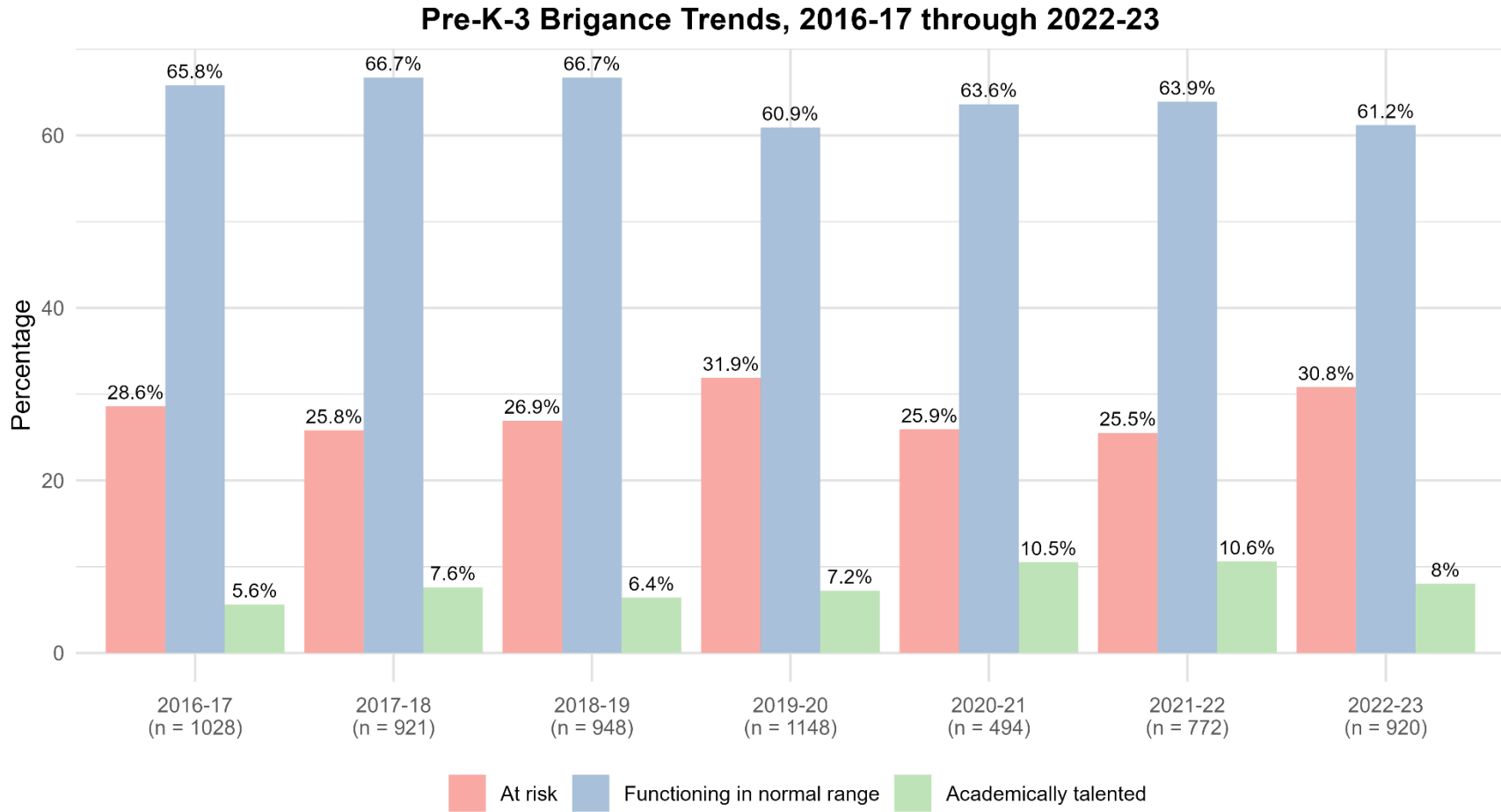**Pre-K-3 Brigance Trends, 2016-17 through 2022-23**

Figure 10. Trends in Brigance III Screening by Cohort Year, Pre-K-3

Pre-K-4 Brigance Trends, 2016-17 through 2022-23
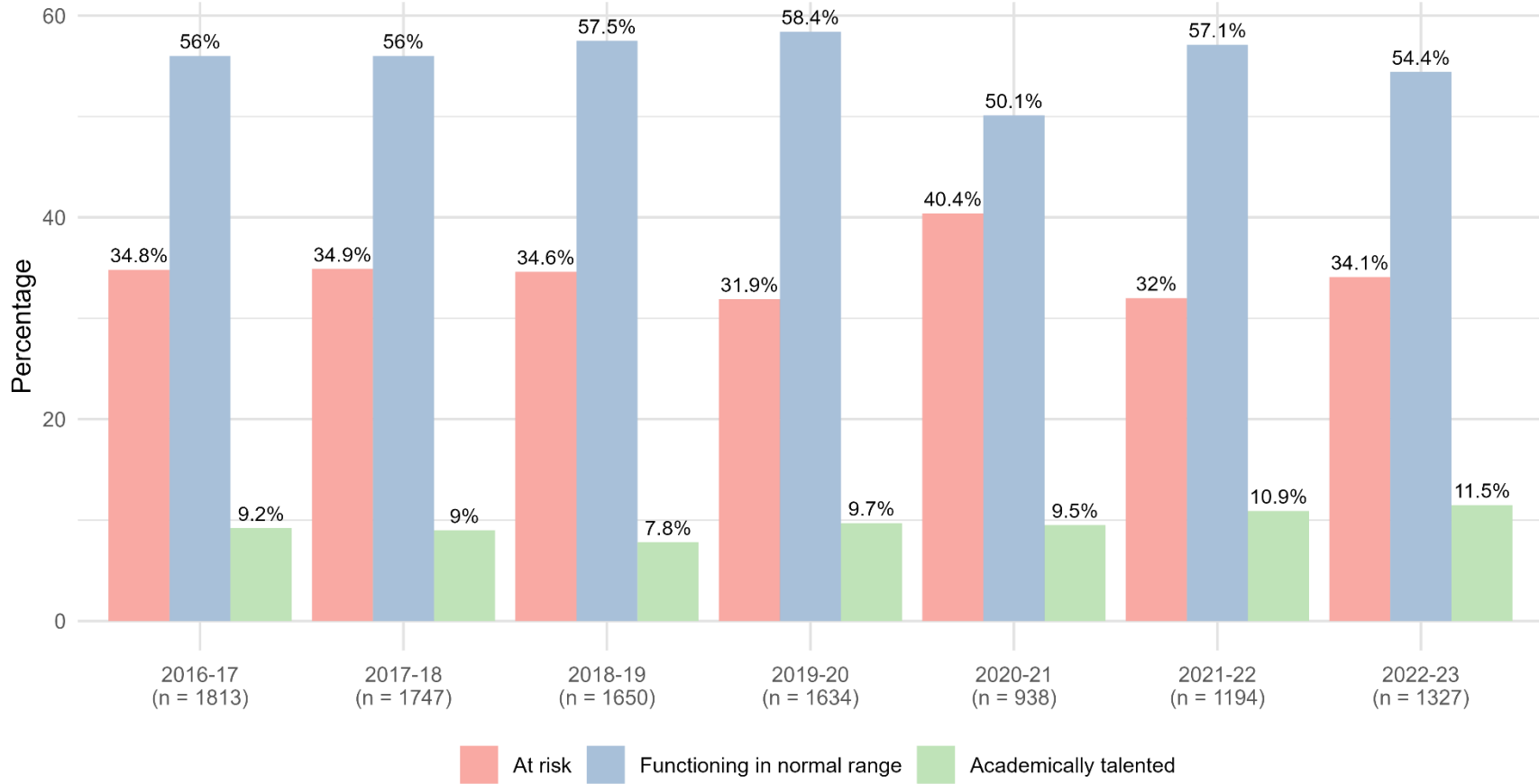
Figure 11. Trends in Brigance III Screening by Cohort Year, Pre-K-4

Get Ready to GROW Screenings

The Get Ready to GROW (GRTG) initiative of Children's Institute conducted 932 pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 comprehensive screenings for Rochester City School District (RCSD) students at community-based organizations. GRTG uses comprehensive state-of-the-art instruments to screen children in multiple areas including vision, hearing, dental, BMI, physical development (motor skills), speech/language, cognitive functioning, and social/emotional.

Below (see Table 18, 19) we present results (total screened and percentage referred for follow-up) for vision (using SPOT technology), hearing (using Pure Tone hearing screening, otoacoustic emissions [OAE] screening, or tympanometry screening), dental (assessed via a visual inspection for tooth decay – 'lift the lip'), BMI (height and weight), motor skills (using the DIAL – Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning), and language (using the Preschool Language Scale [PLS-5]). The total screened and percentage referred for follow-up are shown in the table below.

Table 18. Get Ready to GROW Screenings for Pre-K-3

	N (total screened)	# Follow Up or Referral	% Follow Up or Referral
Vision	372	78	21.0%
Hearing	386	56	14.5%
Dental	299	53	17.7%
BMI	293	79	27.0%
Motor	369	158	42.8%
Speech/Language	357	190	53.2%

Table 19. Get Ready to GROW Screenings for Pre-K-4

	N (total screened)	# Follow Up or Referral	% Follow Up or Referral
Vision	442	101	22.9%
Hearing	493	55	11.2%
Dental	380	61	16.1%
BMI	368	102	27.7%
Motor	455	165	36.3%
Speech/Language	422	166	39.3%

District New Entrants Screening Results

Screening results from RCSD for 4-year-olds are shown below in Table 16. There were 953 students who were screened by the district. Instruments used by the district for screening include PlusOptix (vision), pure tone screening (hearing), Preschool Student Test of Motor Proficiencies (Pre-STOMP; motor), and the Preschool Language Scale-5 (PLS-5; language expression and articulation).

Outside of the Brigance Screening data, the pre-K3 screening for RCSD pupils in the other areas are not included in this report, as further analysis is required. Language and Motor screening protocols differ, using sub-scales of the Brigance to determine developmental levels in these respective domains. These will be reported in subsequent RECAP reporting.

Table 16. District Screening Results, 4-year-olds*

	N (scheduled for screening)	N (screened)	Pass		Refer		Fail	
			N	%	N	%	N	%
Hearing	953	790	706	89.4%	-	-	84	10.6%
Vision	949	823	617	75.0%	152	18.5%	54	6.6%
Fine Motor	948	676	547	80.9%	-	-	129	19.1%
Gross Motor	948	676	634	93.8%	-	-	42	6.2%
Language Articulation	948	648	537	82.9%	-	-	111	17.1%
Language Expression	948	648	376	58.0%	-	-	272	42.0%

*Note for gross/fine motor and language articulation/expression, children who were already receiving services were not screened. The percentages of pass and fail are calculated within the children who completed the screening.

In Table 17, below, is the frequency of students with multiple flags. Notably, less than half of all children scheduled received a "pass" on all developmental screenings. Eighteen percent of students had two or more flags (i.e., failures on screenings). These estimates are conservative, as students already receiving services were *not* re-screened for motor and language. Specifically, 166 children (17.4% of those scheduled for a screening) were listed as "services" and did not have a motor and language re-screen. Additionally, 100 children (10.5% of those scheduled for a screening) were absent for all screenings.

Table 17. Multiple Flags on New Entrants Screening

	N (students)	%
0	423	49.6%
1	256	30.0%
2	114	13.4%
3	37	4.3%
4	19	2.2%
5	4	0.5%
Total	**853**	**100.0**

Note. This does not include the 100 children who were absent for screening.

Conclusions

Screening results in the 2022-23 school year indicate the continued high need of children in the Rochester preschool system. On the Brigance, there were 30.8% of 3-year-olds and 34.1% of 4-year-olds who were categorized as "at risk". Equally important, there were 8% of Pre-K-3 students and 11.5% of Pre-K-4 students who were screened as being academically talented. Both groups of students potentially need additional services or resources.

The district screening results are another significant finding – showing that *language expression* is the most significant area of need among 4-year-olds. Forty-two percent of preschool students failed the language expression scale of the Preschool Language Scale-5. Notably, this does not include children who were already receiving speech/language early intervention services.

References

Brigance, A. H., & French, B. (2013). *Brigance Early Childhood Screens III*. Curriculum Associates, Inc.

FAMILY SURVEY RESULTS

RECAP has been developing, collecting and analyzing parent and family measures and surveys since the beginning of Rochester's pre-Kindergarten program in 1998-99. Numerous instruments have been used over 24 years. The 2022-23 UPK Family Survey represents RECAP's latest work in gaining families' perspectives on the programs their children attend. The current version of the survey includes previous, established measures– many drawn from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – along with district-specific questions about families' experiences in education, health, and social-emotional realms.

Development of the 2022-23 Universal Pre-K Family Survey

The 2022-23 school year marked the second time, since the COVID-19 shutdown in March 2020, that families of pre-K students were electronically surveyed. A small RECAP team convened to amend the district-specific questions to better document families' situations. Questions are amended yearly in this section to capture information about RCSD-specific initiatives and time-specific events. For example, we removed, "How often do you use SeeSaw to help with your child's preschool education?" and "When COVID-19 vaccines for children become available, do you plan on your child being vaccinated?" because these questions were no longer seen as providing useful, actionable information. We brought back questions asking families to grade their child's teacher and preschool program overall, which had been on multiple past surveys. New this year, in an attempt to meet parents' needs, we asked, "How would you prefer to communicate with your child's teacher?" As we have since 2016-17, we continued to include the statistically validated questions from the nationally developed Family and Teacher Relationship Quality questionnaire (FTRQ), discussed in greater detail below.

Administration Procedures

As the world changed with the global pandemic, people became more comfortable with and more reliant on technology, specifically, electronic surveys. In the past, all surveys were scannable paper bubble sheets, preprinted with the students' names, RCSD student identification number, and classroom information. These paper forms were sent to classroom teachers for distribution and collection and delivered to Children's Institute for processing and analyzing. Since May 2022, a new approach has been utilized. The family survey was entered into Microsoft Forms by Children's Institute with a Spanish option (translated by the District's Translation Services), for a one-time, spring distribution.

Children's Institute emailed a UPK Family Survey flyer with a QR code to classroom teachers and administrators with instructions to hang in a prominent location for parents and other caregivers to scan for survey access. This email also included the survey link for teachers and administrators

to post on learning platforms, Facebook or other social media platforms they utilize. They were encouraged to send the link to parents with whom they were in direct electronic contact. This email with attachments was forwarded a second time by an administrator from the District's Office of Early Childhood Education.

The District's Office of Early Childhood Education and Office of Communications assumed responsibilities for survey link distribution directly to parents and other caregivers following standard department protocols for parent communication. Contact data is provided by all custodial parents and caregivers as part of the pre-K registration and enrollment process. The survey link was distributed on two separate occasions to the parents and families of pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students. As reported by RCSD, the first communications blast on May 30, 2023, made contact via 3,232 phone calls, 2,854 emails, and 2,332 SMS messages. RCSD reported the second blast on June 29, 2023, made contact with 3,257 persons, receiving 6,087 phone calls, 3,786 emails, and 6,455 SMS messages. Bounce back rates were not provided. The district reports an average response rate of 10% from parents and caregivers in kindergarten through 12th grade.

All responses included in the data analysis were gathered between May and July 2023, a slightly later collection time frame than previous surveys (May-June). The survey directions stated the time commitment (approximately 10-15 minutes) and assured respondent anonymity. The total number of responses, sample size (N), is 224. Overall, responses decreased slightly from 2021-22 ($N = 264$).

A general breakdown of respondent characteristics and how they accessed the survey are in Tables 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24. Please note, due to rounding, percentages may not always add up to 100.0%. As seen in Table 20, most participants were English speakers.

Table 20. Language preference of respondents ($N = 224$)

	Percent	N
English	97.8% *	219
Spanish	2.2% *	5

*Similar percentages in 2021-22 (English 97.1%, $N = 266$ and Spanish 2.9%, $N = 8$)

In 2021-22, respondents from school-based and community-based centers were 52.3% and 47.7%, respectively ($N = 264$), see Table 21. The percentage of school-based respondents increased, and community-based respondents decreased in 2022-23 to 64.7% and 35.3%, respectively. It is possible this could be due to differing distribution methods between years; however, in the 2021-22 survey, grade level with program-type (i.e., community-based or school-based) was not assessed. Feedback rates were low this year, as can be viewed in Table 22. We address survey response numbers in our recommendations.

Table 21. Categorical breakdown of respondents' children (N = 224)

	Pre-K-3	Pre-K-4	2021-22 (Grade information not gathered)
School-Based	29.0% (*N* = 65)	35.7% (*N* = 80)	52.3% (*N* = 138)
Community-Based	15.6% (*N* = 35)	19.6% (*N* = 44)	47.7% (*N* = 126)

Table 22. Response rates based on end of year registration by category compared with general response rates.

	Pre-K-3 Registration*	Pre-K-3 Response Rate	Pre-K-4 Registration*	Pre-K-4 Response Rate	RCSD Reported K-12 Response Rate
School-Based	763	8.5% (*N* = 65)	1133	7.1% (*N* = 80)	10%
Community-Based	608	5.8% (*N* = 35)	838	5.3% (*N* = 44)	10%

Note. This registration number includes all families that registered for pre-K programming in RCSD during the entirety of the 2022-23 school year. It is not the exact enrollment number from the end of 2022-23. This number does not account for those children who never started attending programming or those that left RCSD before the end of the school year. Therefore, in reality, response rates are likely slightly higher than is displayed here.

Table 23 below shows the breakdown of respondents based on their relationship to the child. Most respondents were mothers.

Table 23. Respondent relationship to child

	Percent	N
Mother	85.3%	191
Father	11.6%	26
Grandparent	1.8%	4
Sibling	0.4%	1
Foster Parent	0.0%	0
Other	0.9%	2

Most respondents were prompted to complete the survey from robocalls and emailed and texted links from the District's Office of Communications. This is mostly consistent with the largest numbers of parents and caregivers accessing the survey from emailed or texted links. See Table 24 below for a breakdown of all options. Separation of responses by grade and school type can be found in the supplemental appendix.

Table 24. Platform by which the respondents accessed the survey.

	Percent	*N*
Posted flyer QR code	5.4%	12
Link on the RCSD's Early Childhood website	0.9%	2
Link sent to my email	58.9%	132
Link texted to me	29.0%	65
Link posted on SeeSaw	4.0%	9
Link on Twitter	0.0%	0
Link on Facebook	0.0%	0
Robocall	0.4%	1
Other	1.3%	3

Description of the Family and Teacher Relationship Quality Measure

In previous years, RECAP used three of five Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality (FPTRQ) measures developed by Kim and colleagues (2015) : Parent, Provider/Teacher, and Director. RECAP changed the titles to Family and Teacher Relationship Quality (FTRQ) measures: FTRQ–Family, FTRQ–Teacher, and FTRQ–Director. The FTRQ–Family was reinstituted in May 2022 for the first time since the COVID-19 shutdown in March 2020. The teacher and director surveys are not currently utilized. For a more in-depth history of RECAP's adoption of these measures, see the Rochester Early Childhood Assessment Partnership Twentieth and Twenty-First Annual Reports (Infurna et al, 2017; Infurna et al, 2018).

The FTRQ–Family asks caretakers general questions about how they interact with their children's teachers. It assesses three constructs and eight subscales which describe family and teacher relationship quality from the family perspective. The FTRQ–Family contains 25 questions rated on a 1-4 Likert scale, with 4 being the most desirable score. Of note, respondent scores were computed only if more than 90% of questions within the construct or subscale were answered. If this criterion was met, missing scores were imputed using mean substitution. Excluding a respondent in one subscale or construct did not prevent that respondent from being included in a different subscale or construct.

In addition, RECAP retained the question, "On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the worst you can imagine and 5 is the best you can imagine, how would you describe your relationship with your child's teacher?" from the FPTRQ parent measure, long form. After the FTRQ questions were posed, information was gathered at the request of RCSD about specific RCSD initiatives. Those RCSD-specific questions will be considered after the FTRQ discussion.

The FTRQ–Family instrument assesses three constructs: *Knowledge*, *Practices*, and *Attitudes*, containing eight subscales. The constructs and subscales, as defined by the authors (Kim et al.,

2015) are:

Knowledge Construct: The Knowledge construct includes 1 subscale: *Family-specific Knowledge*, which is defined as "knowledge and an understanding of families' cultures; the context in which they live; situations that affect them; and their abilities, needs, and goals".

Practices Construct: The Practices construct includes 4 subscales: *Collaboration, Responsiveness, Communication*, and *Family-focused Concern*. The Collaboration subscale addresses collaboration and engagement between families and teachers "through joint goal setting, decision-making, and following up on this decision-making process through the development of action plans". The Responsiveness subscale is defined as engaging "in sensitive, flexible, and responsive support of families' identified needs and goals". The Communication subscale is defined as promoting "positive, two-way communication that is responsive to families' preferences" and teachers' personal boundaries. The Family-focused Concern subscale is defined as "communication that demonstrates interest in the family as a unit".

Attitudes Construct: The Attitudes construct includes 3 subscales: *Commitment, Understanding Context*, and *Respect*. The Commitment subscale measures "sensitivity to the needs of children, parents, and families; intrinsic motivation, or viewing work as "more than a job;" and being sincere, honest, encouraging, accessible, and consistent in interactions" with families and children. The Understanding Context subscale measures "having an appreciation for the broader context in which children's development and families' lives are situated and viewing the family as a unit, rather than focusing on the individual child". The Respect subscale measures "valuing the child and the family; being non-judgmental courteous/welcoming, and non-discriminatory; being accepting of divergent opinions of families (e.g., on managing children's behavior/how to socialize children); and being considerate and patient with families when trying to elicit changes in their behavior".

Analysis: For all analyses, comparison of means between two groups were conducted using a Mann-Whitney *U* test, a nonparametric test of mean differences, with an online calculator available via Statistics Kingdom, unless otherwise specified.

Results of the Family and Teacher Relationship Quality–Family Measure

Results reported for 2022-23 are based on a single survey collection from May to July 2023, similar to the one-time collection in 2021-22. These timepoints were compared to the 2018-19 post-collection, which was pre-pandemic. Figures 12 and 13 present the mean construct and subscale scores, respectively, for FTRQ–Family surveys, from the last three distributions.

RECAP FTRQ-Family measure
Comparison of mean question scores by construct for 2018-19 (Post), 2021-22, and 2022-23

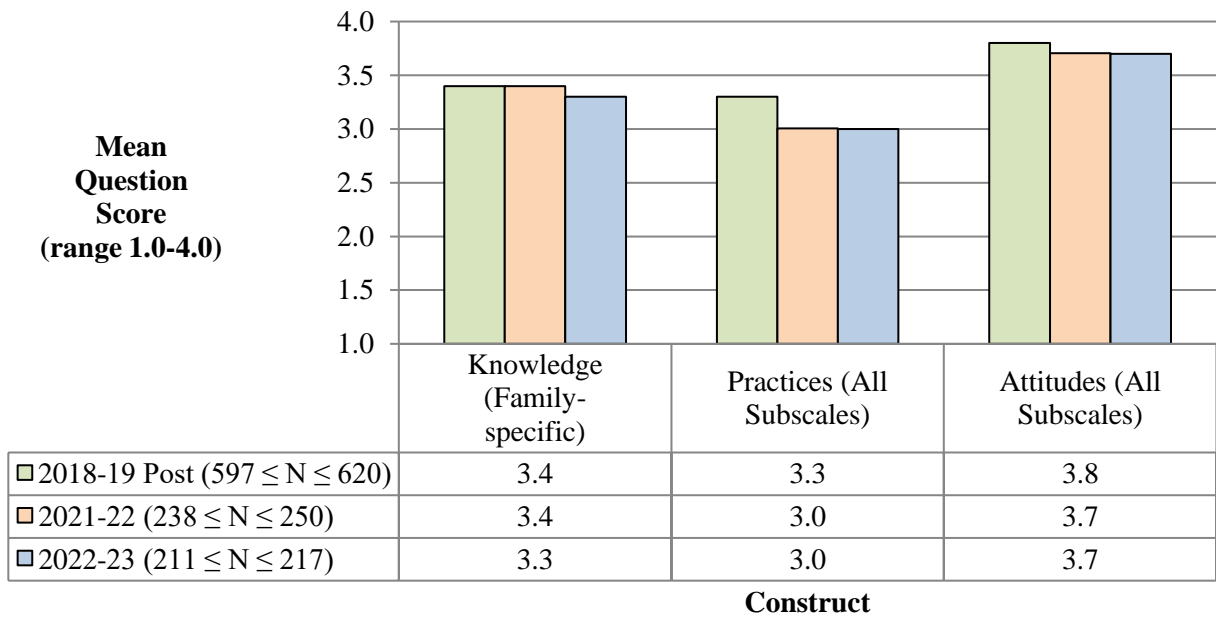| Mean Question Score (range 1.0-4.0)	Knowledge (Family-specific)	Practices (All Subscales)	Attitudes (All Subscales)
☐ 2018-19 Post (597 ≤ N ≤ 620)	3.4	3.3	3.8
☐ 2021-22 (238 ≤ N ≤ 250)	3.4	3.0	3.7
☐ 2022-23 (211 ≤ N ≤ 217)	3.3	3.0	3.7

Construct

Figure 12. **FTRQ–Family** comparison of construct means from 2018-19 (Post), 2021-22 and 2022-23

Note. There was no statistically significant difference between constructs and subscales from spring 2022 to spring 2023.

RECAP FTRQ-Family measure
Comparison of mean question scores by subscale for 2018-19 (Post), 2021-22, and 2022-23

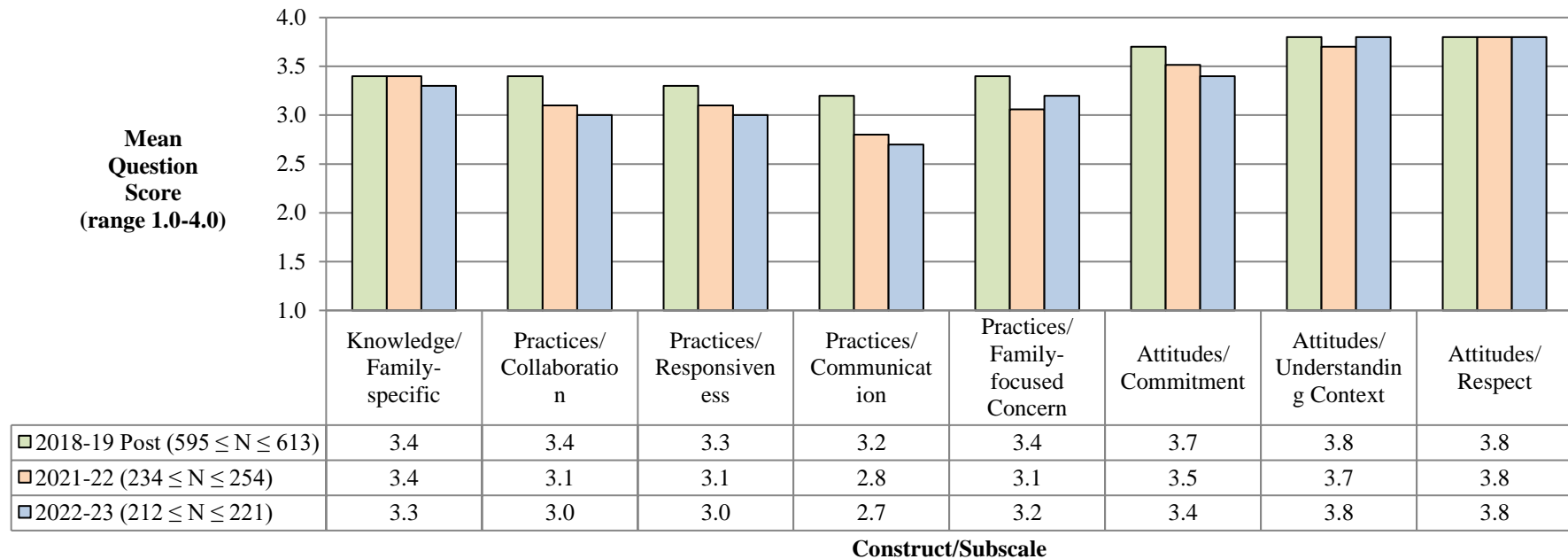|	Knowledge/ Family-specific	Practices/ Collaboration	Practices/ Responsiveness	Practices/ Communication	Practices/ Family-focused Concern	Attitudes/ Commitment	Attitudes/ Understanding Context	Attitudes/ Respect
2018-19 Post (595 ≤ N ≤ 613)	3.4	3.4	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.7	3.8	3.8
2021-22 (234 ≤ N ≤ 254)	3.4	3.1	3.1	2.8	3.1	3.5	3.7	3.8
2022-23 (212 ≤ N ≤ 221)	3.3	3.0	3.0	2.7	3.2	3.4	3.8	3.8

Construct/Subscale

Figure 13. **FTRQ–Family** comparison of subscale means from 2018-19 (Post), 2021-22, and 2022-23

A comparison of means from 2021-22 and 2022-23 showed no significant difference between timepoints for each subscale. To determine whether construct and subscale scores differed by grade level (pre-K-3, pre-K-4), school type (school-based, community-based), or the interaction of grade level and school type (school-based pre-K-3, community-based pre-K-3, school-based pre-K-4, and community-based pre-K-4), we conducted two multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs). No statistically significant differences were found for either main effects or the interaction of grade level and school type for any FTRQ–Family construct or subscale.

Results from the question "On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the worst you can imagine and 5 is the best you can imagine, how would you describe your relationship with your child's teacher?" are presented below in Figure 14.
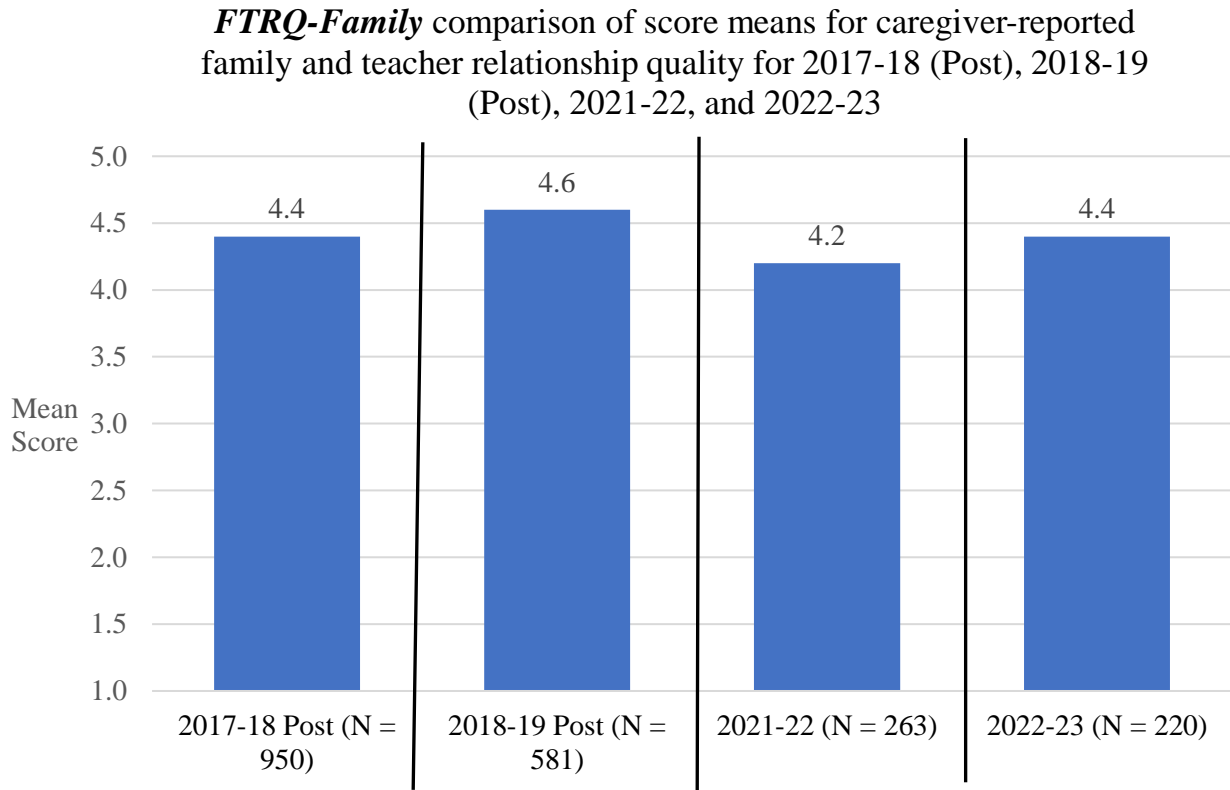
FTRQ-Family comparison of score means for caregiver-reported family and teacher relationship quality for 2017-18 (Post), 2018-19 (Post), 2021-22, and 2022-23

Figure 14. **FTRQ–Family** comparison of score means for caregiver-reported family and teacher relationship quality from academic years 2017-18 (Post), 2018-19 (Post), 2021-22, and 2022-23

There was a statistically significant difference in scores between the 2018-19 (Post) and 2021-22 administration of this relationship quality question, $p < .001$. However, no statistical significance was found between respondents from 2021-22 when compared with respondents from 2022-23.

Tables with further respondent categorization by grade level (pre-K-3, pre-K-4) combined with program type (school-based, community-based) can be found in the supplemental materials. We found statistically significant differences between parents and caregivers of pre-K-4 children at community-based centers and two other groups. In both cases, parents and caregivers of pre-K-4 children at community-based centers rated their relationship with their child's teacher less favorably when compared, separately, to school-based pre-K-4 and community-based pre-K-3 parents and caregivers. However, due to the small sample size and the possibility of a non-representative sample, these results should be interpreted with caution. The overall results from 2021-22 and 2022-23 are reported in Table 25.

Table 25. Frequency Distribution and Mean of Caregiver-Reported Teacher and Family Relationship Quality, 2021-22 and 2022-23 comparison.

	1 (Worst)		2		3		4		5 (Best)		
	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Mean
2022-23 (*N* = 220)	0.5%	1	5.5%	12	10.9%	24	25.0%	55	58.2%	128	4.35
2021-22 (*N* = 263)	1.9%	5	3.0%	8	18.3%	48	22.1%	58	54.8%	144	4.25

Results of RCSD-specific Questions

Again in 2022-23, an FTRQ committee added, removed, and refined questions directly related to family experiences inside and out of the RCSD environment. These questions were used to gather information about RCSD initiatives, school relationships, books, communication, and the health and adjustment of children, the wellbeing of families, and satisfaction of parents with preschool teachers and programming. The results are displayed on the pages that follow.

See Table 26 for information on how families found out about the District's pre-K program. The top three ways survey respondents found out about the program were other, friend, and relative. The findings in 2022-23 differed from the top three reported in 2021-22: PODER 97.1, social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), and print ad (other was not included in 2021-22 annual report). Finding from 2021-22 and 2022-23 may warrant a change in advertising methods by the RCSD's Office of Early Childhood Education. Specific breakdowns by grade and school type can be found in the supplemental materials. Respondents (*N* = 210) were able to select multiple sources.

Table 26. Source of parent information about RCSD pre-K

	Percent	N
Relative	21.9%	46
Friend	30.0%	63
Neighbor	8.6%	18
Print ad	9.5%	20
Bus ad	9.0%	19
Sign on vehicle other than a bus	3.8%	8
TV	10.0%	21
WDKX	3.3%	7
The Beat 105.5	2.9%	6
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)	8.6%	18
PODER 97.1	1.0%	2
La Mega 97.5	1.4%	3
Lawn sign	2.4%	5
Other	35.2%	74

Note. Other included: online/search (7), child attended childcare at location (12), connection to employment (7), RCSD/program list (13), early intervention/therapist/social worker (8), other child at

location or parent attended location (19), live near location (4), newspaper (2), RACF (1), non-word (1)

Family School Communication

Families were asked several items regarding communication with educators. See Tables 27 and 28, below, for results. Overall, results show that most families feel comfortable talking with at least 2 staff persons about their concerns, with the largest percentages feeling comfortable talking with more than 3 persons. No statistically significant differences were found between 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Table 27. Number of program personnel with whom families are communicating.

	No one		1		2		3		More than 3	
	Percent	*N*	**Percent**	*N*	**Percent**	*N*	**Percent**	*N*	**Percent**	*N*
2022-23 (*N* = 223)	6.3%	14	10.8%	24	20.2%	45	18.4%	41	44.4%	99
2021-22 (*N* = 245)	3.3%	8	8.2%	20	23.7%	58	15.1%	37	49.8%	122

In terms of family preference of communication type with their child's teacher, the most preferred modality is in-person. A breakdown of communication preference by grade and school type can be found in the supplemental materials. See Table 28 below for overall results. Respondents (*N* = 223 persons) were able to select multiple types.

Table 28. Family preference of communication type with their child's teacher.

	Percent	*N*
In person	89.7%	200
Texting	64.6%	144
Email	53.8%	120
Classroom communication app (examples: SeeSaw or ClassDojo)	54.3%	121
Phone Call	50.2%	112
Other	3.1%	7

Note. Other included: not communicating (2), with help of English-speaking friend (1), Brightwheel App (1), notes brought home (1), talking points (1), video (1)

At Home Literacy

There is an emphasis in preschool on reading and looking at books with children. Table 29 reports how often families and their children engaged with books together. We compared the 2022-23 results to 2021-22 and did not find any statistically significant differences. However, daily engagement with books in 2022-23 numerically went up to 55.6% from 44.6% in 2021-22. A full breakdown by grade and school type can be found in the supplemental materials.

Table 29. How often families look at books with their children.

	Almost never		Monthly		1-2 times a week		3-4 times a week		Daily	
	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
2022-23 (N = 223)	1.3%	3	5.4%	12	21.1%	47	16.6%	37	55.6%	124
2021-22 (N = 269)	0.7%	2	3.0%	8	21.6%	58	30.1%	81	44.6%	120

Child Health

Parents were asked how often their child visited the emergency room in the last year. Additionally, they were asked when their child last saw a non-emergency doctor or a dentist. The results are displayed in Tables 30, 31, and 32.

Table 30 describes emergency room visits. Most families did not experience an emergency room visit within the past year, but the population with the highest proportion of visits in the past year was school-based pre-K-3 students (see the supplemental materials for the categorical breakdown). No statistically significant mean differences were found between the 2021-22 and 2022-23 groups.

Table 30. Number of emergency room visits in the past year.

	None		1 visit		2 visits		3 or more visits	
	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
2022-23 (N = 223)	64.1%	143	18.4%	41	10.3%	23	7.2%	16
2021-22 (N = 264)	70.1%	185	16.7%	44	9.1%	24	4.2%	11

Most parents reported that their child had visited a doctor in the last year, see Table 31. No statistically significant mean differences were found between the 2021-22 and 2022-23 respondents.

Table 31. Frequency of doctor visits (non-emergency).

	Never		More than two years ago		More than one year ago		Within the past year		Within the past six months		Unsure	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
2022- 23 (N = 219)	1.4%	3	2.3%	5	10.5%	23	16.4%	36	69.4%	152	0.0%	0
2021-22 (N = 270)	0.7%	2	1.9%	5	1.5%	4	28.1%	76	66.7%	180	1.1%	3

Most parents reported that their child had visited a dentist in the last year. However, 14.7% of families said their child had never seen a dentist, see Table 32. No statistically significant mean differences were found between the 2021-22 and 2022-23 respondents.

Table 32. Frequency of dental visits.

	Never		More than two years ago		More than one year ago		Within the past year		Within the past six months		Unsure	
	%	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**
2022-23 (*N* = 218)	14.7%	32	1.8%	4	9.6%	21	11.9%	26	61.0%	133	0.9%	2
2021-22 (*N* = 224)	12.1%	27	0.9%	2	12.1%	27	19.2%	43	53.1%	119	2.7%	6

Child Adjustment and Experiences

Parents and caregivers were asked how well their children were adjusting to school and the words they would use to describe their children's preschool experience. The results are displayed in Tables 33 and 34. The breakdowns by grade and school type can be found in the supplemental materials. Most parents and caregivers found their children had adjusted to school at least good and at best "excellent". No community-based pre-K-3 respondents reported fair or poor school adjustment; all these parents reported excellent or good adjustments. School-based pre-K-4 parents responded fair and poor more often than the other groups, but they also responded with the highest rates of excellent school adjustment. Overall results for 2022-21 and 2022-23 can be seen below in Table 33. No statistically significant mean differences were found between the 2021-22 and 2022-23 respondents.

Table 33. Child adjustment to school.

	Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor	
	%	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**
2022-23 (*N* = 223)	68.2%	152	25.6%	57	4.0%	9	2.2%	5
2021-22 (*N* = 271)	69.9%	184	26.2%	71	4.8%	13	1.1%	3

The majority of parents and caregivers used positive adjectives to describe their children's experiences. The other selection offered some interesting insights into additional words parents and caregivers wanted to share. Results are displayed in Table 34. Respondents were able to select multiple descriptive words.

Table 34. Descriptive words parents selected to describe their children's preschool experiences.

	2022-23 (*N* = 222)		2021-22 (*N* = 270)	
	%	**N**	**%**	**N**
Educational	82.4%	183	82.2%	222
Social	86.5%	192	72.6%	196

Supportive	81.1%	180	71.9%	194
Comforting	64.9%	144	63.0%	170
Joyful	77.0%	171	72.6%	196
Frustrating	10.4%	23	11.5%	31
Unhappy	4.5%	10	4.1%	11
Other	9.0%	20	NA	NA

Note. Other (from 2022-23) included: stressful (1), inappropriate (1), not transparent (1), independent without community-building (1), learning to adapt/journey (2), challenging (1), stimulating (1), thought provoking (1), friendship (1), fun (1), engaging (1), motivating (1), love teachers (2), understanding (1), new (1), negative interactions with staff (2), bullied (1)

Family Wellbeing

The topic of family wellbeing was explored by asking about the loss of family members and the needs of the families. Results are below in Tables 35 and 36. Most children had not experienced a close loss within the past year.

Table 35. Loss of a close family member in the past year.

	No		Yes	
	Percent	*N*	**Percent**	*N*
2022-23 (*N* = 223)	79.4%	177	20.6%	46

Table 36 below shows family areas of need. Families were able to select multiple needs. Most families' needs were being met in 2022-23. When families reported needs, the top three were identified as childcare, reliable transportation, and food. The top three identified needs (again, after no needs) were similar in 2021-22, with one exception. In 2021-22, a more stable place to live was the third-ranked need instead of food. Community-based respondents reported having no needs and having less need around childcare and reliable transportation more often than school-based respondents. Food and healthcare were more often needed for school-based pre-K-3 and community-based pre-K-4 families. Parental employment and a more stable place to live were more of a concern for school-based pre-K-4 families. Overall, from 2021-22 to 2022-23, families' needs being wholly met has decreased, the needs for food, healthcare, parental employment, a more stable place to live, clothing, and reliable transportation have all increased. Childcare and someone to talk with about needs have remained stable.

Table 36. Family areas of need.

	2022-23 (*N* = 207)		2021-22 (*N* = 243)	
	Percent	***N***	**Percent**	***N***
None	63.8%	132	72.8%	177
Food	10.6%	22	4.5%	11
Healthcare	3.9%	8	1.2%	3
Parental employment	5.3%	11	3.7%	9
A more stable place to live	8.2%	17	5.8%	14
Childcare	15.9%	33	16.0%	39
Clothing	7.2%	15	3.7%	9
Reliable transportation	15.0%	31	8.2%	20
Someone to talk with about my needs	5.3%	11	4.9%	12
Other	3.9%	8	NA	NA

Note. Other (from 2022-23) included: child activities/clubs (1), referral to special education school (1), before/after/closed childcare not linked to income (3), help with legal action (1), more sense of community with staff, teachers, and other parents (1), advice navigating difficult conversations with children (1)

Family Satisfaction with Preschool Programing

The topic of family satisfaction with preschool programming was explored by asking respondents to grade their child's teacher and overall preschool program. Results are below in Tables 37 and 38.

Families were asked what grade they would give their child's teacher. Overwhelmingly, families and caregivers gave their child's teacher a grade of excellent. No statistically significant mean differences were found between the four groups of respondents (see the supplement materials for a complete breakdown). This question was last asked in 2018-19. There was a higher rating of teachers by children's families in 2018-19 than in 2022-23.

Table 37. Grade given to the child's teacher.

	Excellent (A)		Good (B)		Average (C)		Poor (D)		Unacceptable (F)		Mean
	%	***N***	**%**	***N***	**%**	***N***	**%**	***N***	**%**	***N***	
2022-23 (*N* = 222)	75.2%	167	15.3%	34	6.8%	15	1.4%	3	1.4%	3	4.62[ac]
2018-19 (*N* = 617)	84.3%	520	13.6%	84	2.1%	13	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	4.82[ad]

[a] In 2018-19 the answer mean was significantly higher than in 2022-23, p < 0.05).

[c] In 2022-23 the mean grade for teachers is greater than the grade for pre-K programming (p < 0.05) and the difference between the mean ranks is medium, the effect size is 0.49.

[d] In 2018-19 the mean grade for teachers is greater than the grade for pre-K programming (p < 0.05) and the difference between the mean ranks is large, the effect size is 0.63. The grade given to teachers and

overall pre-K programming was compared within cohorts (i.e., within 2022-23 and within 2018-19 using an online Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

Families were also asked what grade they would give their child's preschool program overall. Results can be seen in Table 38 below. No statistically significant mean differences were found between the four groups of respondents (see the supplemental materials). This question was last asked in 2018-19. In 2018-19 the answer mean was significantly higher than in 2022-23 ($p < 0.05$). This highlights a higher rating of the overall preschool program in 2018-19 than in 2022-23.

Table 38. Grade given to the child's preschool program overall.

	Excellent (A)		Good (B)		Average (C)		Poor (D)		Unacceptable (F)		Mean
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	
2022-23 (N = 223)	63.7%	142	22.9%	51	9.0%	20	1.8%	4	2.7%	6	4.43[bc]
2018-19 (N = 613)	74.1%	454	21.2%	130	4.2%	26	0.3%	2	0.2%	1	4.69[bd]

[b] In 2018-19 the answer mean was significantly higher than in 2022-23, (p < 0.05).

[c] In 2022-23 the mean grade for teachers is greater than the grade for pre-K programming (p < 0.05) and the difference between the mean ranks is medium, the effect size is 0.49.

[d] In 2018-19 the mean grade for teachers is greater than the grade for pre-K programming (p < 0.05) and the difference between the mean ranks is large, the effect size is 0.63. The grade given to teachers and overall pre-K programming was compared within cohorts (i.e., within 2022-23 and within 2018-19 using an online Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

Qualitative Responses from Caregivers

The family survey included the opportunity to submit comments. Almost half of respondents left an additional comment, approximately evenly distributed among respondent groups (i.e., grade level and school type). Comments contained both positive and negative verbiage. A deidentified selection of comments are found below across several themes.

Positive Feedback (Praise) about Teachers and Schools
Generally, there was much praise for individual teachers and teaching teams, both school-based and community-based. Educators going above and beyond to meet the needs of their families was a common theme.

> *"It was a pleasure my child has come so far and I know it's because of everyone involved the teachers therapists safety guards everyone made a difference in his school experience and I am so grateful"*

"[School-based teacher] goes above and beyond the requirements. She called us even before the year began and communication has been consistent ever since. Her class time is very organized and full of practical learning…"

"We have had a wonderful experience with UPK at [community-based organization]. [Teacher] has been an amazing teacher all year. Now that the year is coming to an end, she has been a valuable resource, taking extra time to help guide us with figuring out the next step for our child next year…We have seen so much growth and learning across all areas...We are very grateful for this program and would definitely go to UPK at [community-based organization] again!"

"Made extra effort to meet extra needs of child with no English and no prior classroom experience"

Parents commented on how secure families and their child felt about attending pre-K:

[Teacher] is an amazing teacher and consistently goes above and beyond. She is loving and respected by the children and provides a multitude of learning activities in and out of the classroom…Looping with the children has been helpful at such a young age and helps the children learn and grow in a familiar safe environment."

"…The start of the year was rough with it being our first time apart but her teacher made sure she felt safe and comfortable every day! The attention and care she showed to her students and their families made all the difference."

Several parents provided remarks about the community and diversity of families and the connections they made as a result of pre-K:

"This has been a wonderful experience and RCSD exceeded our expectations. Our child is now exposed to students with different family structures, values, and socio-economic backgrounds".

"[Community-based organization] is great. We had the same cohort of GenEd kids in Prek3 and PreK4 with their… special Ed friends and it was a really amazing two years…as Covid restrictions lifted I got to know the teaching team and the other kids and families so much more. I highly recommend the integrated classroom model. We are also lucky that so many people in our…neighborhood send kids to [community-based organization] so it's really nice to bridge school and home for community building. [Teachers and Staff] are all wonderful."

Parents often commented about how their child had developed as a result of pre-K:

> *"I cannot say enough good things about [community-based organization]. The teachers along with [staff] from The Children's Institute helped to change my once timid and scared child into a happy and social child who loves school and learning. I feel confident knowing I'm leaving my child with people who genuinely put stake in my child's future and success."*

> *[Translated to English from Spanish by Google Translate]: "[Community partner] is the best place where I have been able to put my Child, he has improved a lot in his development and therapies. Thank you For your service and attention I feel very happy with his progress."*

> *"I find this program wonderful my son wasn't talking much but now he talks up a storm"*

> *"I think bringing the preschool program to elementary schools was an awesome ideal and it worked great for my now 4 year old who has gain so much knowledge…"*

> *"My son is Exceeding all kindergarten expectations and he's in PreK 4, thanks to the hard work of his [school-based teacher], she is patient and supportive and the way she presents the material is fun, engaging and interesting to him, he looks forward to going to school daily!"*

> *"I was a bit concerned that my grandson who does not live with me but I see him every day may have some delays. Within a month of attending [community-based] pre school that concern was erased completely! He is thriving there.."*

Suggestions for Improvements

Families included specific suggestions for improvements, including the need for more, better paid staff and better transportation:

> *"The schools need to attach the prek students with the rest of the school and stop treating them like outsiders."*

> *"Excellent program - caring and competent leaders. Need more staff."*

> *"When I was thinking about all of the positive attributes listed in this survey, I had his paraprofessional…, in mind though. She is incredible. My kid loves her so much and she is so supportive and non -judgmental and lovely. She really cares for the kids and works so so so hard. Whatever she gets paid, it's not nearly enough. She is such a valuable*

member of our pre-K family."

"The only criticism I have is that pre-K students aren't guaranteed a spot in kindergarten in their current school."

"Couldn't potty train because class has 2 many students & not enough teachers, child is in integrated class when needs complete special needs class…class is basically daycare…teachers are spread thin…."

"It is hard to transport my child every day to school. RCSD must do better and give free transportation to pre-K, 3 & 4."

Curriculum

Parents offered feedback about the curriculum, some positive, some negative, and some mixed. Some caregivers viewed the curriculum as too academically rigorous and not developmentally appropriate. Several parents wished for more outdoor time and/or time for gross motor play:

"[School] is awesome and should be a model for other schools. [Teachers] are an exceptional team. More teachers should have access to alternative teaching models…"

"I'm not sure how much individual instruction my daughter receives in class or how effective it is…Overall the experience has been positive and we prefer it to be more social and fun than academically rigorous at this age, however, it still concerns me that they could not provide support for some easily correctable issues."

"I don't think 3 year olds should be expected to do homework. I wish that my child's school… had trees and shade areas outside for kids to run around and play and that I knew that kids were playing outside every day and…isn't contingent on doing homework or "being good". There is a beautiful relatives new pool in the school…and I wish that kids were getting in the water and learning how to swim…I wish that there was an active PTA and a sense of parent-teacher-staff engagement and a feeling of strong community around the school."

"I would have loved to see them go on field trips and go outside more...despite the day not being perfect weather…"

"Pre-k has become too academic at too high a level. It's not age-appropriate. There's not enough play time or social-emotional learning time, and definitely not enough outdoor time (only a 20-minute recess, and whether or not to go outside is up to the teacher)."

Conversely, other parents wished children spent less time learning through play and more time on skills such as reading and writing:

> *"My son has the ability to learn with kids ages 4-5; [his birthday makes him one of the oldest in his class], and this prevents him from being moved up. Socially, he gets along well with kindergarten aged children and is working on reading and gross motor skills. I wish he had more time to work on reading."*

> *I understand it's a learn through play curriculum but it's also important for them to write there names, identify letters, count, etc. My child's teacher does do some of this but…"*

> *"They don't teach kids anything on books. Like alphabet, numbers at all. Just let them play and draw things"*

> *"I thought the 3s class would be more abc/123 educational. It's mostly play and once lunch comes the day is over due to nap so like they have maybe 3 hours to "learn". But she got speech and has improved greatly there…"*

> *"I would like to see more early literacy pieces that will continue to get them ready for kindergarten.*

> *"I wish they would had more of a lesson plan/ curriculum."*

Nap time feedback included:

> *"Less nap time my child came home everyday and wouldn't sleep until after 12am"*

> *"My child since starting the school has not made my progression education wise. My child has absolutely gained social skills…In my opinion the preK class has spent more time sleeping then learning…"*

Need for regular feedback and general communication
Parents emphasized the need for more communication, specifically with classroom teachers and center directors and more regular feedback about their child. These comments are reflective of the lower scores on the FTRQ-Family in the Practices Communication subscale.

> *"Aside from me reaching out to the teacher about when my child will be absent there is NO other communication coming from the teacher...Meanwhile the principal over communicates on all the events going on at school..."*

"There was a lot of turnover at my child's pre-k program this year. Several teachers. A new director. This new director does communicate through email and she is responsive but I can't even tell who the teacher actually is…They had several closings due to inadequate staffing/illnesses. Didn't have any parent teacher conferences though I inquired about them. No reports of his progress. See Saw was not utilized like his EPK program did…so I just work with him at home…It's nice to have options outside of a school based PRE-K but wish they were supported more by the district..."

"My child's main teacher never made the effort to really try to get to know my family nor my child really…It truly saddens me that my toddler doesn't get to experience one of the best preschool programs Rochester offers like how their older siblings got to."

"There just aren't many opportunities to talk face to face with teachers. At drop off and pick up there is always a lot of commotion and not a great time to hear real feedback…it would be nice if there were…some other way to get more regular feedback."

"I feel I should be getting a update on my child's progress just like if my child was going to a regular school. The program is great but sometimes it gives me the feeling of a daycare not a school!!!"

"I would like to have more meetings with the teachers...Also, I would like to know the rules at school better so I could remember my child and try the same rules at home too."

"I don't hear regularly about any structured progress or more "academic" areas to work on (ie letters, writing practice, etc). I see evidence of progress within my child, but unsure how to support that going forward."

One parent also commented about the lack of communication with the wider community and news media – specifically, the need to communicate about the positive experiences and programs at RCSD:

"The only thing rcsd is doing poorly is telling its success stories. Rcsd does not communicate with local media or put out positive stories. I appreciate all the informative outreach to parents but the communications department is completely failing…The school board is even worse. When do you start telling the community about all the good stuff going on here?..."

Desire for family-classroom engagement

Several parents' comments described the desire to be more involved in the classroom community:

"I wish there was more opportunities to be involved as a parent in the classroom."

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"There is no family/parent engagement. This is the stage where parents should constantly be engaged in their child's learning. I never received a rubric on what my child should know or an update on my child's educational growth, or what she needs to work on etc. I love her teacher, however I wish the program was more robust and parent inclusive. There are no parent meetings, celebrations, or anything."

"Parents are not included enough. It feels like a separate educational journey. Home vs school when in fact, it should be a collaborative effort."

Need for wrap around care

Parents emphasized the importance of wrap-around care. They also spoke about the difficulty of different starting times with multiple children:

"The only things I really don't like about the PreK program are:
-need some-all school based sites with wrap-around care b/c a 6 hour day is very hard to manage when you have 2 working parents (or 1 working single parent)"

"Wrap around care is very important at this age and the reason why we chose [community-based organization]"

"An expansion of after-school care programs would make a big difference to our family. We strongly considered switching to a CBO program for next year (pre-K) solely based on the aftercare availability, but decided not to because we didn't want to give our child another transition."

"I have a hard time with the school hours. I think it should match [upper grade] hours or like a 15- 20 min difference. I have four kids and all goes to different schools. So it would be nice if they could get the times closer together."

"I value CBO based UPK programming due to proximity to home/school and wrap around care available. Please continue this"

Transparency

"So many things have changed since I worked in the program which saddens me to where I will be looking for another preschool for my child's younger sibling…I've Never gotten an "incident report" when my child got hurt/injured & should have…Never have I been asked anything about my family's faith/our believe, nor culture or any family values…Unfortunately a center is only as strong as its director!"

"This incident happen [in May 2023]. What was given on incident report is not what the teachers gave to the principal I'm still waiting patiently to be acknowledge."

"[Incident]…He was 3. He has autism...Then she offered pamphlets on helping him with hygiene...It was offensive and embarrassing. Her style of communication is often brash and rude…How does a special education teacher lack sensitivity in these areas?"

"The teacher left the program with no communication to parents and it really had an impact on my child… They had different staff filling in for the rest of the year…I feel more answers and transparency would've been helpful. My child failed hearing test and I wasn't notified until 3 months afterwards and that's unacceptable...do want to say the main sub did try her best with what she was handed."

Concern about survey
"I'm concerned about the overall validity of this survey as it was not optimized for viewing on a mobile device…I'm curious also how this data will be used, given my strong concerns about its validity."

Conclusions

There were several notable findings from the 2022-23 family survey. On a positive note, 93.8% of families rated their child as having a good or excellent adjustment to school. Additionally, parents most often described their child's pre-K experiences as educational (82.4%), social (86.5%), and supportive (81.1%).

When asked about having areas of need, 63.8% of families reported none, down from 72.8% of families in 2021-22; families are experiencing more needs when compared to last year. Of parents and family members who reported needs, the greatest needs reported were childcare (15.9%), followed closely by reliable transportation (15.0%), and food (10.6%).

Parents reported that 20.6% of children experienced the loss of a close family member in the past year. This is a notable proportion of our young children losing close family members.

Limitations: There are several limitations of our family survey findings that must be noted. First, the sample size was smaller than pre-pandemic collections, and it is possible that parents who took part in the family survey this year are not a representative sample of the pre-K family population (i.e., selection bias).

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FAMILY ENGAGEMENT: THE CARING CONNECTIONS PROGRAM

Caring Connections Background

The *Caring Connections* program was developed in Spring 2020 to address the digital access crisis and to support engagement with families of pre-K aged children in the city of Rochester. In Year 1 of this program (2020-21), over 319 families participated throughout school-based and community-based sites. Devices (Wi-Fi and tablets) were distributed to families in need of them, and family engagement specialists worked with families to enhance digital literacy and promote connectedness. In Year 1 of the intervention, we found that attendance rates were higher for children of families who participated in the program (see Duprey et al., 2021). In Year 2 of the Caring Connectors program (2021-22), we partnered with family engagement specialists (i.e., our "Caring Connectors") to co-develop and implement a series of webinars in spring 2022. The goal of webinars was to educate parents about the importance of play for pre-K children, to improve attendance of pre-K children, and to facilitate engagement with pre-K parents (both among each other and between families and schools). Findings from this series showed improvements in parents' understanding and knowledge of the importance of play in early childhood education; improvements in parent-teacher communication; and improvements in children's attendance over time compared to those whose families did not participate in the webinar series.

In Year 3 of the Caring Connections program (2022-23), we again partnered with our Caring Connectors to offer two series of programming for families of children enrolled in RCSD pre-K. The Fall 2022 program was titled "Be Your Child's Voice" and was designed to support families of pre-K children who were either receiving or were planning to receive special education services. The series included one webinar, held by a preschool special education specialist, and a follow up Q&A session for parents that was facilitated by the Caring Connectors. In spring 2023, the webinar series was titled "Healthy Me – Healthy We" and focused on social and emotional learning, infant and early childhood mental health, and the importance of emotional health for parents. The series culminated in a session titled "The Parent's Voice", where parents were encouraged to share their experiences and ask questions. For all Caring Connections programs, families were compensated for attending sessions and for filling out evaluation surveys.

Below, we report upon findings from the fall 2022 webinar series. Results from the spring 2023 series are forthcoming in a special technical report.

Evaluation Results for Fall 2022 Series

Participants
Overall, there were 22 participants who attended the first webinar, and 16 who attended the second time. There were 30 people who filled out the pre-test and 16 filled out the post-test. 70% of participants (21 out of 30) had a child currently enrolled in pre-K. Additionally, 79.3% of parents

had already signed a consent form for their child to receive special educations services in school, while 20.7% had not. Of those who had already signed the consent form, 65.5% were still waiting for their child to be evaluated. There was also some continuation of parent involvement from previous sessions of Caring Connections: 17.2% of parents had attended the spring 2022 series on the importance of play and attendance.

Impact of Caring Connection Fall 2022 Series on Parents' Knowledge of Special Education Services

Parents were asked to rate their knowledge on a scale from "1" (*not at all aware*) to "5" (*extremely aware*). Items included "How much do you know about the special education referral process?", "How much do you know about special education services", and "How aware are you about resources that are available to help you navigate the special education system?"

Changes in parents' knowledge was analyzed with a paired samples t-test and a one-sided significance test. Findings showed that parents' ratings of the item "How much do you know about special education services?" significantly increased from pre-test ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 1.06$) to post-test ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.18$), $t(14) = -2.09$, $p = .028$. **This is evidence that the webinar series may have led to increases in parents' knowledge of special education services.** There were no other statistically significant changes in other items assessing parents' knowledge.

Impact of Caring Connection Fall 2022 Series on Parents' Attitudes Towards Special Education Services

Parents were asked to tell us about their attitudes towards special education services on a scale from "1" (*do not agree at all*) to "5" (*agree completely*). Items included "If my child receives special education services, they will have a label that could set them back in life", "Special education categories or labels are helpful for getting my child the services they need", "I trust that special education services will help my child learn and grow", and "My child will be stigmatized (treated unfairly) by their peers if they receive special education services".

Changes in parents' attitudes was analyzed with a paired samples t-test and a one-sided significance test. Findings showed that parents were significantly more likely to agree with the item "My child will be stigmatized (treated unfairly) by their peers if they receive special education services" at pre-test ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.06$) than at post-test ($M = 1.93$, $SD = 1.10$), $t(14) = 2.78$, $p = .02$. There were no other statistically significant improvements in the other items about attitudes towards special education services. **Overall, t**his is evidence that, after taking part in the webinar series, parents were less likely to believe that special education could be stigmatizing.**

Impact of Caring Connection Fall 2022 Series on Relationships, Trust, and Help-Seeking

Relationship with child's teacher: Parents were asked "On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the worst you can imagine and 5 is the best you can imagine, how would you describe your relationship with your child's teacher?" The average rating of parents' relationship with their child's teacher increased from 3.20 ($SD = .41$) to 3.53 ($SD = .52$). This change was significant in a one-sided paired samples t-test, $t(14) = -2.09$, p = .03.

Family-Teacher Relationship Questionnaire: Parents were administered a subsection of the Family-Teacher Relationship Questionnaire (Kim et al., 2015) that addressed frequency and quality of communication between caregivers and teachers. The average score on the FTRQ-Family Practices-Communication scale increased from 2.82 ($SE = .28$) to 3.30, p ($SE = .19$) = .055. This approached statistical significance at $p = .06$.

Trust: Parents were asked to rate: "On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all and 5 is the most, how much do you trust special education providers in the RCSD school system?" Findings from a two-sided paired samples t-test showed that level of trust increased significantly from pre-test ($M = 2.67$, $SD = .98$) to post-test ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.00$), $t(14) = -2.65$, $p = .02$.

Help-Seeking: Parents were asked: "If you had a question about special education services for your child, how likely is it that you would seek help from the following people?" Response options ranged from "1" = Extremely unlikely to "5" = Extremely likely. Sources of help included teachers, AFE/parent liaisons, school special education staff, other school administrators, healthcare providers, friend or family members, and another parent at the child's school.

**Likelihood of Parents Seeking Help from Different Sources
Pre- and Post-Caring Connections**
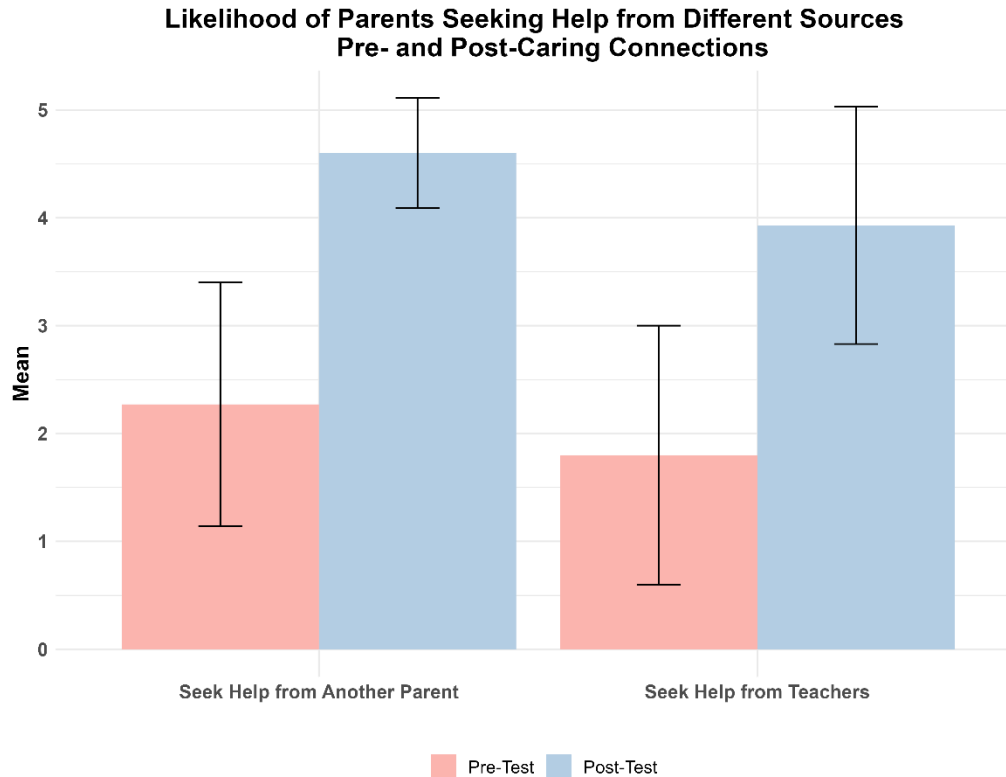
Parents were more likely to seek help from teachers at post-test (M = 4.6, SD = .51) compared to pre-test (M = 3.93, SD = 1.10), and this was significant in a one-sided paired samples t-test, t (14) = -2.00, p = .03.

Additionally, parents were more likely to seek help from another parent at their child's school at post-test (M = 2.27, SD = 1.13) compared to pre-test (M = 1.80, SD = 1.20). This difference was also significant in a one-sided paired samples t-test, t (14) = -1.97, p = .03. There were no other significant differences between sources of help from pre-test to post-test.

Overall, these findings highlight the potential for the Caring Connections program to build relationships between pre-K caregivers and teachers, increase parents' level of trust in educational services, and contribute to developing supportive relationships between pre-K caregivers.

Open-Ended Results
Parents responded to several open-ended items about the webinar as well as about their experiences with special education services.

Webinar-specific feedback: When asked "What was one thing you learned from the webinar?", 6 out of the 14 respondents said they gained a better understanding of the special education process, and 2 respondents said they learned that others were going through the same thing. When asked "What is one thing you would have changed about the webinar?", 3 parents stated they would like

more meetings, 3 parents stated they wouldn't change anything, 1 parent wanted "more discussions among parents", and 1 parent said they wanted help with continuing the routines they learned in the webinar.

Feedback about special education services: We asked parents "What are you feeling as you're waiting for your child to be evaluated?" Most parents who responded to this question (N = 5) responded that they were feeling nervous or anxious, while 4 parents stated they were coping well.

Additionally, we asked parents for information about why they might not have signed the special education services consent form. Responses included "child is not enrolled yet" (N = 3), "Haven't received it yet", "I get so overwhelmed with everyday life I forget", "I lost the paperwork", and "I wasn't told that I should".

Overall, these results indicate that additional support for parents, including enhanced communication during the evaluation and consent process, would benefit pre-K families.

Conclusions

Evaluation results from the fall 2022 webinar series provide evidence for the effectiveness of the program for increasing parents' content knowledge and strengthening connections both between caregivers and schools, and between caregivers with other caregivers. In light of these results, we recommend a continuation of the Caring Connections program in the 2023-24 school year to further engage with parents and increase connections through digital means.

As the topic for the fall 2022 Caring Connection series was specific to parents of children with special education needs, our evaluation findings also apply to pre-K special education services more broadly. After one 60-minute webinar with a special educator, parents had more knowledge of special education services, and they were less likely to believe that special education services could be stigmatizing for their child. These findings highlight the value of time-limited interventions or educational sessions for parents. We recommend future webinars or other opportunities for parents to connect with special education educators and administrators. Additionally, many parents acknowledged feeling "nervous" or "anxious" as they waited for their child to be evaluated. This waiting period of time may be an ideal time to intervene and provide parents with more education and opportunities to connect – both with one another, and with special education services staff.

Looking across the three completed years of the Caring Connections partnership, we acknowledge the leadership of school and community-based family engagement specialists in the role of Caring Connectors. Their expertise in family engagement, authenticity of trusted relationships with families, and passion for early childhood education has generated effective educational sessions to address immediate needs of families in Rochester. We recommend that other initiatives and locales

adopt this model as it is responsive to emerging family needs and incorporates learning and follow-up activities through evaluation and feedback mechanisms.

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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the launch of Universal pre-K in 1998, the RECAP evaluation system has evidenced a high-performing early childhood program. Decades of evaluation results indicate that Rochester's pre-K system shows strengths in multiple areas. These areas include curriculum delivery, professional development, length of the school day, high-quality coaching received by teachers, assessment tools, stability of leadership, and the founding of relationships between families and schools, among other strengths.

Despite the collective competencies of Rochester's pre-K system, children's needs have also become so great as to outpace the preschool system's capacity to fully meet these needs. For instance, results from screenings indicated that, this past year, educators needed to respond to one out of two pre-K-3 children who arrived at preschool with at least one area in need of additional support, referrals, and/or follow-ups. Thus, despite our system's positive results on classroom quality and other markers, fewer than half of pre-K children were ready for kindergarten by June.

The 2022-23 cohort of pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 students is unique, having spent their earliest years growing up in the COVID-19 pandemic, often with limited social experiences and possibly higher levels of stress in the family system (Brown et al., 2020; Irwin et al., 2022). Additionally, the early childhood system in Rochester, and many other communities nationwide, continues to be challenged by funding shortages, evaluation resource shortfalls, staffing shortages, and historically high levels of staff turnover. In the Rochester city area, rates of violence are going up while poverty continues to challenge many of our families. A recent report by the Children's Agenda revealed a remarkably high rate of housing instability, particularly in the early grade school years (Nabozny et al., 2023). **The preschool classroom provides a safe and nurturing environment, which is critical for children in the preschool years as they undergo rapid growth and brain development.**

This report illustrates that the quality of Rochester's pre-K system held steady despite numerous challenges felt among everyone engaged in this system over the past few years: pre-K children, their families, teachers and system leadership. Each chapter of this *Twenty-Sixth RECAP Annual Report* presented a particular aspect of assessing the pre-K system: student outcomes, classroom quality and outcomes, and family systems' experiences and engagement. Summaries of these findings and related recommendations are detailed below.

Pre-K Students
Students continue to grow at high rates, although not quite as high as pre-COVID. Pupils' needs are greater than ever before. In screening, problems with students' vision, hearing, motor skills, language skills, cognition (learning) and social-emotional development have reached an all-time high. Kindergarten readiness is lower than pre-COVID levels. Further, two years of pre-K is now

more important to students' growth than ever before. Two emerging "bright spots" are integrated classrooms and Bilingual classrooms.

Our report highlights several assets:
- There continued to be high rates of developmental and pre-academic growth that are comparable to previous years.
- Scores on the Child Observation Record were consistent or higher than those in 2021-22, and there was a 2% improvement in kindergarten readiness.
- In contrast to findings in 2021-22 and prior years, there was not a statistically significant difference between boys and girls in kindergarten readiness. This may represent a "catch up" in this year's cohort of 4-year-old boys.
- Two years of pre-K matters now more than ever. Only 36.3% of children who attended pre-K-4 were considered kindergarten ready in spring, while 51.0% of children who attended both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 were considered kindergarten ready in spring. This is the largest differential between one year versus two years of pre-K in RECAP history.
- Children continued to show excellent growth in one social-emotional arena, Assertive Social Skills.

There are also several areas of challenge:
- Overall, preschoolers arrived at school with greater needs than ever before, possibly owing to the life stresses children and their families are facing.
- Screening results via Brigance, Get Ready to GROW, and RCSD New Entrants screening all showed areas of concern. In pre-K-4, approximately 1 of every 2 students screened as "normal", while approximately 1 of every 3 students screened as "at risk" and potentially in need of additional services. Results from GROW and New Entrants screening highlighted language, and particularly language expression, as an area of need.
- There were exceptionally high rates of social-emotional problems. More than 1 of every 3 students in pre-K-3 had multiple areas of social-emotional risk in spring, while more than 1 in every 4 students in pre-K-4 had multiple areas of social-emotional risk.
- Compared to previous years, there was delayed growth in the 'peer social skills' subscale of our social-emotional adjustment measure (T-CRS-sf). The effect sizes for this were low, ranging from .06 to .08.
- Ready for kindergarten was below pre-COVID levels, especially for pupils who experienced only one year of pre-K. In 2018-19, before COVID, 50.0% of pupils who attended only one year of pre-K were ready for kindergarten, and 57% of those who attended both pre-K-3 and pre-K-4 were ready for kindergarten (Infurna et al., 2019).
- On the Child Observation Record, *Language, Literacy and Communication* and *Mathematics* have both improved but still lag compared to criterion-referenced benchmarks, and compared to other subscales on the COR.

- Attendance continued to be an area of concern, with only 53.9% of pre-K-3 students and 51.0% of pre-K-4 students attending 80% or more days in the school year (note <80% attendance is considered chronically absent).

Pre-K Teachers and Classrooms

Overall teacher competencies and classroom quality remain high as evidenced by the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Third Edition (ECERS-3), the internationally-adopted instrument used since the beginning of RECAP. Stable classroom competency is especially laudable when considered with the large new teacher corps due to unprecedented levels of teacher retirements and staff turnover.

Our report highlighted several assets:
- Classroom scores on the ECERS-3 remained high and comparable to previous years, including pre-COVID. With another composite score of 5.4, the same as last year, this is still a high-performing system. A literature review conducted in 2022 showed that Rochester's pre-K system outperformed other comparable districts (see Duprey et al., 2022, RECAP 2021-22 Annual Report).
- Professional development remained successful in rapidly "growing" pre-K teachers. Even with the high turnover rates, the scores held at the same level.
- On the ECERS, Interactions was the highest subscale of classroom quality. Although there was a modest drop in 2022-23, it remained high. Interactions are a key part of classroom evaluation and child learning.
- The Language and Literacy domain remained high, which is critical since this is an area where students struggle.
- There was a significant improvement in Routines, for the second straight year, with a non-trivial gain of half a point on the ECERS-3.
- The highest classroom quality scores were for integrated special education classrooms, which spotlights the strengths of these classrooms and teachers.
- Bilingual classrooms have been performing at very high levels for two consecutive years. In these classrooms, students scored higher on the overall Child Observation Record, and their English Language Learner subscale score had a higher rate of growth from fall to spring, compared to students in non-bilingual classrooms.
- More than 1 in every 2 teachers had less than 3 years of experience. Despite this, classroom quality scores on the ECERS-3 did not differ depending on teacher experience. There were wide variations within each grouping of teacher experience (e.g., new versus 10+ years of experience), which is to be expected. This underlines the importance of our professional development efforts.

There are also several areas of challenge:

- Over half of pre-K teachers had three or fewer years' experience, and this is likely to accelerate in the coming years.
- While improving or at least holding steadily, *Learning Activities* remained the area of greatest challenge for teachers.
- While the *Space and Furnishings* domain lagged modestly, it is not a reflection of teacher competencies nor supplies and equipment provided but is often a facilities issue.

Pre-K Families

Rochester's families have faced many daunting obstacles in the past few years and these challenges continue. RECAP annually surveys parents, and families' responses remain stable. Parents and caregivers are very positive about their child's experiences in pre-K. They do report greater needs in childcare, reliable transportation and food insecurity.

Our report highlighted several assets:
- Parents reported they felt respected by their child's classroom teacher, which is consistent with findings from previous years. Pre-K is the start of a fourteen-year relationship and partnership (pre-K through 12th grade) between children, parents, caregivers, and school.
- Eighty-three percent of respondents had two or more preschool staff they felt comfortable talking with about their concerns.
- Parents (94%) reported their child's adjustment to pre-K was good or excellent. This is also consistent with previous years.
- Overall positive feedback from parents and families was consistent with previous years, which speaks to the quality of programming. Over half of respondents left a comment which suggests an openness of caregivers to share their opinions. Most words used by caregivers to describe their child's pre-K experiences had positive connotations.
- Most respondents (64%) reported not going to the Emergency Room in the past year, but during the same time, visiting a non-emergency doctor (86%).
- Grading of the teacher and overall pre-K programming satisfaction was high, but not as high as in pre-pandemic years. Teachers (75%) were graded "Excellent" more than programming (64%). This may be a methodology issue for the 2022-23 year, as we utilized online surveys only.

There are also several areas of challenge:
- Low response rates require a more organized and directed distribution plan in the future. Mothers were the primary respondents. Along with more responses, responses from caregivers other than mothers would be ideal.
- Twenty-one percent of students experienced the loss of a close family member in the past year. The loss of close family members remains a major concern.

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- Fifty-six percent of respondents looked at books with their child daily. While this percentage increased from 2021-22, this remains a key area of focus.
- Parents and caregivers prefer in person communication with their children's educators. Scheduling time for these interactions could make a difference in the parent-teacher relationship.
- A subset of parents (15%) report their child has never visited the dentist. Historically this figure has been in the 30% range. This decrease may be the result of selection bias in the survey, although there are also indicators that more dental care for more Rochester children has become available.
- Parents are reporting unmet needs in critical areas: c*hildcare* (15.9%, about one family in six); r*eliable transportation* (15.0%, more than one family in seven); and f*ood insecurity* (10.6%, about one family in nine). This is the first time we have highlighted families reporting need in the realm of food insecurity.
- Parents report that improvements are required in communication between families and staff.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Classroom Quality

Given that over half of teachers had less than 3 years of experience, we recommend continued focus on professional development, particularly for new teachers. Data-informed professional development for early childhood educators is a hallmark of the RECAP system, and we believe is a key ingredient to our sustained high-quality classroom environment scores over the years. Additionally, there was a small decline in the *Interaction* subscale compared to previous years. We recommend reinstating CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring system) observations, due to its specific focus on interactions between children and educators. CLASS observations were last conducted in the 2018-2019 school year and were cut due to funding shortages. Last, we recommend focusing improvements on classroom spaces and learning activities, as these two categories historically have the lowest ECERS-3 scores. Specific improvements may include space and time for gross motor play and gross motor equipment, incorporating blocks and math materials into learning activities, and incorporating activities and materials relating to nature and science. Last, we recommend a more detailed analysis of specific ECERS-3 indicators to inform budgetary decision-making and to guide improvements for the upcoming academic years, including professional development topics.

Recommendations for Social Emotional Learning

Attention should be given to curriculum and teaching that can enhance peer social skills among preschoolers. We recommend full implementation, including additional training throughout the school year, on the Pyramid Model. The *Pyramid Model for Promoting Young Children's Social-Emotional Competence* is an integrative framework for social-emotional learning in early

childhood settings and follows a three tiered-approach to address children's social and emotional needs and challenges (Hemmeter et al., 2006). Currently, the Office of Early Childhood is working with directors and programs to continue implementing the Pyramid Model, including offering revised professional development modules to teachers. Last, we recommend that educators take a trauma-informed approach to social and emotional learning in the classroom. This is consistent with the Pyramid Model, which takes a trauma-informed approach and emphasizes the importance of relationships between children and educators.

Recommendations based on the COR

Our finding on the impact of two years of preschool and kindergarten readiness underlines the importance of preschool attendance. We recommend the additional year (i.e., pre-K-3) of preschool for RCSD families to enhance their children's future kindergarten readiness.

As in prior years, students scored lowest on Math and on Language, Literacy, and Communication. We recommend additional professional development on curriculum in these areas.

The current bilingual classroom model showed good results for the second consecutive year, with students scoring higher on the COR overall score, and having a faster rate of growth on English Language Learning. We recommend continuing and/or growing this program, given the increasing number of bilingual students in the district.

Recommendations for screenings

While the district is required to screen all incoming preschoolers, we recommend that this screening take place as early as possible. Due to the high percentage of students potentially in need of additional services, we recommend earlier screening so that additional services and IEPs can be put in place before the beginning of the school year. The high percentage of screening failure on language expression is alarming and thus we recommend focused attention on language development. Services for families prior to preschool – beginning at birth - may help close this gap. Funding and service availability are needed to help fulfil these recommendations.

Recommendations for family experiences

Based on results from the Family Survey, we have several recommendations for the pre-K system to continue to improve resilient outcomes for children and their families. First, to be able to get a more robust population sample, a more organized method of survey distribution should be explored and promoted. A greater emphasis on teacher participation in survey advertisements may help boost response numbers and thus give a more comprehensive representation of preschool families.

We recommend promoting supports for children and families that have lost a close family member in the past year. Further, we recommend educators emphasize the importance of caregivers looking at and reading books with their children daily. Strengthening communication between educators and parents is an idea for additional professional training. We recommend adults communicating

in person as much as possible, providing feedback about the cognitive and social-emotional development of children. Regarding children's health, we recommend continued attention to the importance of regular medical visits, particularly dental visits. Last, as families noted having more needs than ever, we recommend that schools work collaboratively with families to explore their unmet needs, including childcare, reliable transportation and food insecurity.

Recommendations for family engagement

Based on our evaluation results from the Caring Connections program, we recommend future webinars or other opportunities for parents to connect with special education educators and administrators. Additionally, many parents acknowledged feeling "nervous" or "anxious" as they waited for their child's evaluation. This waiting period may be an ideal time to intervene and provide parents with more education and opportunities to connect – both with one another, and with special education services.

Second, based on the lower scores in the Practices-Communication subscale of the F-TRQ, we recommend teachers survey parents at the beginning of the school year to assess preference for communication modalities – that is, whether parents prefer phone, in-person, or other means of communication.

Last, given the success of Caring Connections, we recommend that other initiatives and locales adopt this model as it is responsive to emerging family needs and incorporates learning and follow-up activities through evaluation and feedback mechanisms.

Summary

The RCSD pre-K system, which includes over 2,600 pupils, 180 teachers, 54 school and agency sites and an administrative system of 20 leaders, coaches and support staff, has demonstrated resilience in the face of some of the most daunting challenges in the history of RCSD pre-K, RCSD, and the city of Rochester. This evaluation report provides critical data to guide RCSD pre-K in the coming years as it continues to build back and strengthen, with the goal of providing quality early education for Rochester's children.

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